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***FROM RED SEA
TO BLUE NILE***



Zaiditu, Empress of Abyssinia

FROM RED SEA TO BLUE NILE

Abyssinian Adventure

By ROSITA FORBES

*Author of "The Secret of the Sahara," "Raisuli—The
Sultan of the Mountains," "If the Gods
Laugh," "A Fool's Hell," etc.*

*WITH FIFTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR*

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To
ABYSSINIA
AND HER HEIR-APPARENT
H. I. H., RAS TAFARI.

FOREWORD

THIS is not a book on Abyssinia. It is the record of three months on muleback, the story of what happened to Mr. Harold Jones, cinema operator, and myself during an eleven hundred mile trek through mountains and forests, rivers and deserts in search of photographic material. It is a tale of adventures, serious and frivolous, of what we saw and heard and did between the Red Sea and the Blue Nile, but it is only an impression of Abyssinia as she appeared from tent and saddle.

ROSITA FORBES.

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***FROM RED SEA
TO BLUE NILE***

FROM RED SEA TO BLUE NILE

CHAPTER I.

ANTICIPATION.

IT is a very good boat," said the Parsee doubtfully, "but it is not for passengers." His gaze wandered past me out of the window, to where a tramp of perhaps 130 tons with an incredible list to port was anchored in the harbor. "There is one cabin, certainly," he continued, and pushed back his sweat-stained fez to scratch his head with a toothpick.

"We cannot both sleep in that," I protested, thinking of Jones, my cinematographer, and the enormous tins of films from which he refused to be parted.

"Sleep in it!" echoed the Parsee with horror, "but nobody can sleep there!"

Somewhat bewildered, I left the office with a dirty slip of paper which entitled me to the hospitality of a Persian cargo boat between Aden and Djibouti, but a few hours later the mystery was solved. The "cabin" was a hole, apparently in the bowels, and water swirled gently back and forth across the floor. The blankets on the shelf which served as a bunk were bright pink and the cockroaches it seemed found them comfortable, for they lay there in heaps, waving their whiskers with that horrid watchfulness that makes cockroaches so unpleas-

ant. After one glance Jones and I mutually offered each other the sole use of the cabin, and clambered up on deck. The moon was a magic lantern projecting the rocks of Aden flat and black against a sheet of silver. The sky was a net so heavily weighted with stars that it drooped above us. By standing on tiptoe it seemed as if one could steal one of the lights of the Milky Way and set it, twinkling, on the table. By the radiance of these myriad sky candles, and rolled in blankets as the breeze freshened, we ate gray matter, pounded into unnatural shapes, which an Arab assured us was fish. I had a bag of dates which I shared with a Levantine and a portly Sayed from Hadhramaut, who was going to Addis Ababa to visit a cousin. He was very distressed because he was unable to discover from a little wizened man who spoke the language of Damascus, whether the Abyssinians were civilized enough to understand the making of a certain floury paste flavored with oil, pepper, and nuts, which he considered essential to his sustenance. I fell asleep in the middle of the discussion, and woke to find the Levantine politely fanning the flies off me. Somaliland was a bed of violets on the horizon and the Sayed was talking of dogs. "The Saluki should have feet fringed like the eyes of a woman," I heard him say as I went in search of breakfast.

While the tramp ploughed her way, with much grunting and rolling, over a sea of glass, the wizened one produced a bundle of quilts and, from inside it, a terrier puppy. A couple of natives drew nearer, their mouths open, obviously hoping that this was a new form of conjurer! "See now, here is a real dog," said the Syrian,

but the Sayed only snorted. For him the greyhound was the only animal worthy of such a name.

"It isn't a dog at all," he announced, "it's a—it's a boojie!" The insult was so great that conversation languished till the rattle of the anchor-chain announced our arrival at Djibouti. "Allah be praised," said the Sayed, clearing his throat with the noise of an exhaust. I ventured to agree with him and was promptly submitted to an inquisition as to how and why I had come to this "land of strangers." When I confessed to a roundabout approach by way of Palestine and Syria, Iraq, and Persia, the old man gazed at me with dismay. "Allah pity you," he exclaimed, "traveling is not fit pursuit for women."

The Arab doctor took us ashore in his launch and a veritable "open sesame" of a document presented me by French officialdom prevented inquisitive douaniers sticking their fingers into raw film on the theory that it might be tobacco or opium. We walked to the hotel through valleys of pink hibiscus and I decided that Djibouti, white and neat and empty, looked as if it had just been washed and dumped out in the sun to dry. The check tablecloths and the crisp yard-long breads, with the flasks of red and white wine reminded me of Southern France, and the patronne, who insisted that Jones must sleep in the "lingerie" since the hotel was full and it would be a crime to send him to the desolation of the rival inn, had the accent of the Midi. Djibouti was busy exporting hides and coffee and importing Maria Theresa dollars and she did her business in a soufflé of different languages which made her seem very cosmopolitan. Even the Somalis wore their white tobh

draped round their waist and flung over the shoulders—cape and kilt in one—with an air of sophistication, from which I am not certain whether the addition of a felt hat detracted or not. Consequently I understood the horror of the British Consul, when a fair young thing recently passing through as a “Complete Sportswoman,” asked him if she could wear shorts in the train to Addis Ababa!

That train, alas, departs at dawn, so in darkness we sampled Madame’s exquisite coffee, paid the very last extra that her thrifty ingenuity could conceive and went out to find a gharry. “Better take one each,” said the Somali porter, looking at us as if he thought our combined fifteen stone were more than any one animal could be expected to pull. In silence I looked at a broken horse tied together with harness made of rope. Equally silently Jones prodded the ghost of what might once have been a packing-case or a cubist toy.

“Yes, we will go singly,” I said. “Better sit well in the middle.” My warning was justified, for a wheel came off after 200 yards and the journey was finished on foot.

There was nothing ghostly about the station except the half light which turned the yelling mob of porters into a white wave of humanity that threatened to engulf us as it had already done our baggage. The Somali idea seemed to be to weigh every item as many times as possible and hurl it with vociferous violence on to a pyramid of crates in the van.

“My camera!” moaned Jones as a score of hands swept it from him. The tripod was thrown on the head of a merchant in a gold turban who, naturally objecting, dashed it to the ground. The uproar must have gone to

my head, for I found myself leaping the counter and wrestling our more breakable possessions by main force from the crowd which, under excuse of weighing, seemed to be determined to stamp and tear them to bits. Finally, by a combined rush, we bore the cameras through the gate and, piling them on the platform, breathless, heated, bruised, sat on them until the stationmaster came to the rescue!

After this our leisurely progress across Somaliland was peaceful. The train rested before most hills or after any very violent corner. It stopped when the driver wanted a drink, or the mechanic tested the wheels with a spanner nearly as large as himself. Most obligingly it pulled up at mid-day in the shade of mimosa trees before a little estaminet where we ate macaroni and goat's meat with appetite. The Sayed greeted me warmly from a bench where he discussed women with an acquaintance in a magenta turban and a blue frock. Divorce is much practiced in Southern Arabia, so I was not as surprised as his companion when he announced that he had already had over eighty wives.

"Inshallah, you will live to make up the one hundred," gasped the turbaned one, but the Sayed was indignant.

"My gray beard is the result of wisdom, not of years." he retorted with a scowl. "I hope, indeed, that the number will be two hundred."

I choked over my coffee, for most intimate details followed. . . .

All afternoon the train dawdled through sand and rock. "Dust devils" whirled up like great columns of smoke, and occasionally one broke over the train,

smothering us in grit. After leaving the border hills, it was a monotonous country of black stones and red earth, but gazelles ventured within tantalizing range and a hawk or two hovered over some invisible prey. Towards sunset the advance guard of the Abyssinian mountains broke the line of plain. Between the foothills rolling upwards, amber and rugged, there was a forest of scrub. Thick green bushes with juicy leaves, a mist of gray acacias and skeleton thorns, with hundreds of hanging bird's-nests, gave promise of the changing country which lay beyond Dire Dawa and the gates of Ethiopia.

"Attractive land to camp in and plenty of shade," I suggested, but Jones spoke learnedly of visibility and light values, so I retaliated by spreading out the largest map and planning optimistic routes. That is the charm of a map. It represents the other side of the horizon where everything is possible. It has the magic of anticipation without the toil and sweet of realization. The greatest romance ever written pales before the possibilities of adventure that lie in the faint blue trails from sea to sea. The perfect journey is never finished, the goal is always just across the next river, round the shoulder of the next mountain. There is always one more track to follow, one more mirage to explore. Achievement is the price which the wanderer pays for the right to venture.

So the routes I planned to Lalibela grew more and more complicated. Abyssinia can offer every contrast of mountain and valley, desert, river and forest, of walled medieval town and thatched mushroom village, of troglodyte and hillmen, priests, courtesans and sav-

ages, of courteous simple hospitality and the glamour of ancient violences, but Lalibela is her jewel, secret and unique. The dozen legendary churches like Petra "rose red and half as old as time," are hidden among the rocks and thorns of Lasta. Built by slaves or angels, by Egyptians, Phoenicians, or Arabs, the glamour of these subterranean marvels was as strong for us as for the 500-year-dead priest, the Portuguese Alvarez, who first described them. Since then, the red mountains have revealed their secret to scarcely half a dozen Europeans. The monks who guard the monoliths babble of their miraculous construction and add to its mystery by showing records so old that a breath might destroy them, with paragraphs in Arabic interspersed between the Geze. Lalibela then was our goal, and it lies in the heart of Abyssinia with innumerable ranges as its walls, rivers as its moats. . . . I returned to the friendliness of my map and planned a route, whose charm was the extent of ground it covered, most of it perpendicular!

We arrived at Dire Dawa while I was hesitating between Massawa on the Red Sea, or Wad Medeni on the Nile, as the pleasantly far-away end of a journey so tortuous that I had given up trying to excuse it.

There was another battle over our luggage, during which various articles dripped out of my flea-bag which had burst a strap, and then we were escorted to the hotel by a kindly Armenian merchant who adopted us at sight. My bedroom opened on to a thicket of bougainvillea pierced with scarlet poinsettias, and a heavy-scented creeper hung like a curtain round my door.

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"From the moment you enter Abyssinia till the moment you leave it," warned our new friend, "you will never meet an honest man."

Later I decided that many Abyssinians are honest with money, none with their thoughts, but, for the moment, I accepted the verdict literally and stolid Ethiopian called Esheti as bodyguard.

Next morning we two went to the market with a bagful of the smallest coins I could procure—they were piastres and worth about 3d. each, but they had remarkable buying powers. We purchased grain, coffee and sugar for the caravan, and huge sacks of salt to barter for eggs and milk in the interior. Then we strolled round the square crowded with the usual half-civilized, half-commercialized medley of races that haunt railway outposts in Africa. Somali women crouched under straw shelters, their hats rolled in nets, their throats laden with beads—yellow seemed to be the fashionable color—and a strip of red cotton wound gracefully over one shoulder. They sold goat's butter in woven bowls, milk smelling of the smoke with which the calabashes were dried, and thick lumps of tobacco set out on leaves. White-robed tribesmen passed hand in hand, with yellow clay on their heads, spears across their shoulders, sometimes swinging a pole at each end of which was a bundle of living birds. Townsmen and townswomen were almost indistinguishable with their white muffled *chammas*, and close-cropped curly hair. Two or three widows with shaven crowns sheltered by the most curious little pagoda-like umbrellas of straw, dragged their saffron robes through the sand. A madman wound up in rope

till he looked like a black parcel bursting from its wrappings, cried out for alms. A musician with a scarlet turban sat under a mimosa tree playing on a stringed gourd, and, near him, a dog gnawed at a bullock's head thrown in the dust. It was the gate of Africa with her glare and heat and smell, and when marriage music burst suddenly from a fenced compound, there was a hint of the spell which underlies such things.

"It is a friend of mine who marries his daughter—she is fifteen and the bridegroom is twenty-two," said Esheti, as the beat of drums swelled into a rhythmic clamor. "Come and see—there will be much dancing and noise."

He led the way, smiling, into a court full of servant girls and slaves, beggars, lute players and small boys who made the most frightful gurglings with fingers stuck down their throats. Half the yard had been converted into a great tent, and, when a charming host in spotless white garments bordered with green had begged us to enter, we found several hundred people, men and women, seated on the floor round an open space. There was an inner circle of men with rifles and among these danced ebony figures, white turbaned, white swathed, with long-stemmed flasks of oil, with which they sprinkled the multitude, who kept up a sonorous clapping of hands. The very black faces and very white garments made a curious contrast and, in the dim light, it was almost as if patches of shadow drifted up and down on a frozen sea.

In one corner some women held up a square of white muslin within which Esheti informed us was the bride. "The men jumping there are relations," he said,

"they dance and shout to keep away evil spirits, but presently they will all drink *tedj* till they forget!"

Before I could ask for further explanation, the multitude began to surge out into the yard where there was a group of gaily-caparisoned mules. The bridegroom, wearing a blue and white veil and a dark cloak, was assisted to mount by three friends, who apparently acted as groomsmen. The bride followed. Lengths of gauze were held over her like a tent, but the instant she was in the saddle it was all swathed round her and surmounted by a Stetson hat! Not to be outdone, the bridegroom and his attendants assumed the same headgear on top of their veils, and the procession crowded down the narrow path, a mass of wild, leaping figures, preceded by musicians playing on oddly shaped stringed instruments, the bearers of the sacred oil, and ragged figures carrying platters of food draped with scarlet cloths. I wanted to follow them to the feast, but Esheti was stern. "The morning is gone," he reproached, "and there is much to do about the caravan." Apparently he felt a friendly or possibly a financial interest in us, for he announced that he would find us servants and muleteers, as well as baggage beasts and "strong fat animals fit for your superiority to ride."

Thereafter I interviewed guides who would not go as far as I wanted, and others, more crafty, who promised everything with a volubility that did not compensate for their sly glances. I communed with cooks, who seemed not to know the difference between a chicken and an egg, and culinary experts who wanted to take a grocery store with them. Mules by the dozen crowded the streets outside, but they were all lame or had sore

backs. An escort of soldiers was necessary, but when what looked like a battalion paraded for inspection, most of them seemed uncertain as to the reliability of their rifles. There were no English saddles to be had, and the Abyssinian ones were not only seats of torture, but had small stirrups supposed to be held between the toes. The caravan leader—known as the *khabral*—who had been recommended to me, had vanished into the mountains, and all that was known of him was that he would certainly return to-morrow, or after to-morrow, or sometime. In fact, as usual in organizing an African caravan, there came a moment when, having investigated all forms of transport from camels to little gray donkeys with black stripes on their shoulders, and seen the last of the guides who knew all the country except where we wanted to go, it seemed as if we should never get started at all.

Then, one morning Esheti appeared with a thinner and blacker edition of himself. "This is Gabra Gorgis—he will be your cook," he announced, and from that moment things began to go better. Gabra Gorgis looked at my stores with pity. "We will now go to the market and buy what is really useful," he said, and I spent an instructive morning bargaining for oils and spices, small bundles of leaves for flavoring, curious pots and pans which Gabra Gorgis insisted were more suited to wood fires than our enamel ware. We also laid in a store of highly ornamental cups lest "the great should come to visit our camp," and some padlocked cases to prevent the soldiers or muleteers taking too much interest in our food. The next day everything happened at once. Six soldiers were produced by the Armenian mer-

chant, and another half dozen to act as guarantors during their absence. This system undoubtedly facilitates trekking with an unknown escort, for each servant, soldier or guide must leave at the starting-point some reliable guarantor, a *dalmin*—literally one who will be faithful for him—who is responsible to the local authority for the behavior of his friend.

The warriors had scarcely departed to buy sandals and blankets, which are a part of their wages, though I believe they generally sell before starting, when a "boy" with a wistful expression was dragged into my presence. Gabra Gorgis insisted that he was a pearl of servants, and in answer to every question, the youth said, "I can wash clothes beautifully!" On the strength of this, and his expression, I engaged him, in spite of a name which began with Gabra Miquael Gallav—the end I never could pronounce.

There was a rumor that a troop of fine mules had arrived from Harrar, and we rushed down to the grain market to engage them as soon as they had unloaded. On the way a tall man saluted my companion, and Gabra Gorgis literally threw himself upon him, clutching him by the shoulder as if afraid he might take flight, and shaking him to be quite certain he was real. "There are three men looking for thee in the mountains, thou fox!" he exclaimed by way of explanation, "come now with us and choose the mules." In this way Omar the *khbral* was added to our party. He was still protesting when we reached the group of acacias under which the mules were rolling free of their sacks. "Do not look too closely, lady, I beg of you," murmured Gabra Gorgis, but miraculously we were able to pick out a dozen

sound beasts and when on our return we found a mournful Indian tailor had brought our mosquito nets, and a tinker had unearthed some rusty English stirrups, our spirits rose in anticipation of speedy departure.

Of course there were further delays. The coinage of Abyssina consists of Maria Theresa dollars, 80 per cent. silver, worth approximately three shillings (about seventy-four cents) each, and of an incredible size and weight. A sack containing £50 worth of these was as much as I could lift, and four such bags form a mule load, but, as there is no change in the interior, dollars are of very little use except for a Cræsus. You can buy twenty eggs or two chickens for a piastre, and a sheep for three quarter-dollars, but unfortunately all these coins are more or less mythical, and you have to go out into the market with your beautiful shining white dollars, and haggle for piastres and quarters at an inflated value. There is another snare for the unwary. The quarterthaler is stamped with a crowded lion, but if the beast has his mouth open and a particularly flamboyant twist to his tail, the tribesman will not accept him, so Jones and I spent weary hours bargaining for neat quiet lions, with shut mouths and slinky tails. At last we came back, burdened with small sacks, dumped them into a suit-case with a sigh of relief and attempted to lift it into a corner. Both handles broke at once. We sat down on the floor and looked at each other mutely. . . .

There came a voice from outside—"Lady, the soldiers say it will be wet on the mountains and they cannot buy any stuff here to make a tent, and the poles you ordered in the *sug* are too long for the mosquito nets, and Gallan has fever, so that his insides shakes."

Another voice broke in—"It is not fever that he has—the bad one has been eating *kat*! Lady, shall I tie the stirrups on with string, for your legs are too long for this saddle." We were no longer mute!

That afternoon every member of the caravan asked for advance pay, on the ground that he had a sick wife or a child whose smallness was measured by an appealing hand a few inches from the ground. As every man appeared later with a bundle of fresh green leaves in his belt, I imagine that most of the money was spent on *kat*, a drug which alternately stimulates and depresses, and which is supposed only to be eaten by Moslems.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARKS AT HARRAR.

IT had been arranged that we should start at six, so at five a. m., in complete darkness, before the cocks had begun their crowing match, we were dressed and looking out for the arrival of our mules. Gabra Gorgis and Gallan carried out the baggage, muttering their discontent. "Everything's always an hour or two late in this country," I assured Jones, when a gray light crept across the verandah and there was no sign of a beast.

"I do not believe the mules are in town yet," announced Omar, returning from his fifth survey of the street. He explained that, to avoid expense, the *na-gadis* always send their animals to feed in the hills and brought them in just before they were wanted.

When the sun rose we were all sitting on piles of luggage at the edge of the street, looking almost as foolish as we felt.

"What about another breakfast?" I suggested, remembering the excellence of the hotel coffee. It so far cheered us that we discussed the Arab saying, "There are three starts and then there is a real one."

"I dare say we'll be off by noon," remarked Jones.

At nine came a rumor that the last that had been seen of our mules was a disorderly mob galloping away into the mountains. About mid-day the messenger we had

sent to inquire into this story returned, trying to look depressed, but really delighted with the unexpectedness of their information. The mules, they said, had been attacked in the night by hyenas, one had had its leg eaten off, and the others had stampeded. Their owners were still chasing them. The story grew rapidly, and the last I heard of it was that a lion had eaten the *nagadi*!

As unobtrusively as possible, we returned our baggage to our rooms, changed into civilized garments and went out to watch the arrival of Dejezmatch Imaru, the Acting Governor of Harrar, who had been attending the wedding of Ras Tafari's daughter in Addis Ababa.

The procession was attractive. First came soldiers of all sizes and shapes, "simply swathed in cartridges", as Jones expressed it in the intervals of working the cinema. These were the personal bodyguard of Ras Tafari, trained by former non-commissioned officers of the King's African Rifles, uniformed in European khaki. The Dejezmatch followed on foot, a slight man with a distinguished carriage, which his wide black cape and rodeo hat did much to hide. Behind him came his officials, a mass of very white draperies, with here and there a splash of scarlet bordering a cloak. There were women holding absurd little pagoda parasols over an infinity of plaits so finely braided that they looked like a net. Porters staggered under loads of steel dishes, or perhaps they were shields. Horses, with tassels swinging from their lion-embroidered saddle-cloths, were led by retainers armed with rifle and spear, and the rear was brought up by fuzzy-headed mountaineers, lepers, beggars, a few dozen dogs and a stray goat.



Leaving the train (and civilization) at Dire Dawa.



An Abyssinian wedding. Bride and groom with heads swathed in gauze.



It was very hot, and a bar of chocolate in my haversack melted and ran into my comb and brush.



The raw warm flesh is disposed of in a few mouthfuls five minutes after the initial knife-thrust.

We had only just packed away the camera when a message came that His Excellency would like to see us, so Jones and I went up to the little Government House, built on a hillock in the middle of Dire Dawa, and surrounded with verandahs from which there is a glorious view of hill and valley. It is approached by a mass of steps, which soar up almost perpendicularly between very drugged looking lions. "There's something missing in those animals, but I can't think what it is," murmured Jones, as we plodded up flight after flight between the disappointed thousands who sought audience of the great man.

Dejezmatch Imaru received us in a big, almost empty room, hung with red, the lion predominating in the canopy and decoration of a chair of state. He spake a little French, and the mystery of our summons was soon explained.

"In the *Illustration* last year," he said, "I saw your picture with an Arab Chief! I remember it because he was the largest man I had ever seen. I did not know anyone could be so monstrous." I laughed and told him about the Moroccan Sherif Raisuli, whose girth was so vast that he had to have a special door and a special chair made for him. Imaru has a thin, intelligent face, and his smile comes just often enough for one to appreciate its attraction. After he had volunteered to send a wire to Ras Tafari asking for a special firman to facilitate our journey through the mountains, he invited me to come and see his wife.

In a room furnished with gilt French chairs and tables, a woman was sunk in an armchair, inert amidst her wrappings, which lapped up to her lips white fold on

fold. Her fine black eyes were lashed as thickly as a deer's, her hair meshed so intricately as to suggest embroidery, but she was tired after a long journey, or too shy, perhaps, to speak more than a few formal words of greeting. Servants brought glasses of golden *tedj*, the drink made with honey and bitter herbs, of which Baudelaire wrote—"*Le plus grand délice, c'est de boire l'hydromel dans le crâne d'un enfant.*"

We discussed travelling, and the Ras was of the opinion that a mule caravan was infinitely preferable to a train. "From the railway," he said, "one sees nothing of the country but its dirt, and one eats and breathes that as well. You are wise to ride; you will gain everything but time." He smiled, adding: "Shall we ever consider that quite as precious as you do, I wonder?"

When we returned to the hotel we found a depressed group of animals clustered round the steps in charge of a Nagadi who surely was Ham the son of Noah. His face, in its thicket of white hair, was noble and square and lined in broad valleys, between which showed the moulding of the bones. His eyes were deep set and candid, with the look that is neither old nor young, but very wise. Unfortunately, his dialect was incomprehensible to everyone in the caravan except his muleteers who, for our benefit, translated and elaborated his few words—I don't think he ever used more than half a dozen consecutively.

It was difficult to reproach such an individual for anything so incomprehensible to him as a day's delay, and it was awkward to have to point out that, whereas I had certainly chosen sound mules, most of those he had brought had backs as raw as meat in a butcher's shop.

"He says it does not matter," announced a curly-headed black Pan who should have had a pipe in his belt. In despair we saw the mules driven into a yard, saw the door locked, and announced once again that we should start at six.

At three-thirty there was a thunderous knock on my door, which must have awakened everyone in the street.

"Is it time yet, lady?" asked Gabra Gorgis.

"It is not," I retorted, wishing I could remember a really satisfactory Arabic curse. The next hour was enlivened by songs from the escort, waiting in the street, and after that we gave in.

Most of Dire Dawa turned out to see us start, and I felt the way we meandered up the dry river bed outside the town was hardly worthy of the interest we excited. A couple of soldiers went first, their rifles in their hands, immense curved swords sticking out behind them like tails. Laden with every form of box, bundle and sack, the mules drifted purposeless after them. Jones and I vainly tried to keep our mounts straight, but, after the first exhausting mile or two, we realized that you don't ride mules unless you're born and bred to them,—you merely sit on them and try to avoid the heels of their neighbors. During our progress through the sands of the Harri valley I thought longingly of camel caravans, for a camel can only kick one way, whereas a mule has something magic about his joints and can kick equally effectively in all directions and with all feet. Jones just missed a blow on the shoulder from a white beast with a torn ear, and a hoof glanced off my wadded saddle-cloths before I learned discretion. It was very hot, and a slab of chocolate in my haversack melted and ran into

my brush and comb before I noticed it dripping down my boot.

The dust was thick in the river bed, for it is the main road of the hill villagers coming to market their produce in the town. We met troops of donkeys laden with fodder, and camel strings tied head to tail, driven by half-naked blacks, the whole of their luggage, comb, toothpick, tobacco and ear scratcher, stuck in their flaring hair. The women were the heaviest laden of the beasts of burden. They passed us in scarlet-robed groups, bent double under stacks of firewood, with a baby or a bundle of chickens slung on their hips. Sometimes their hands were full of calabashes, a towering pumpkin was balanced on their heads and a goat wrapt in the sash round their waists. Herds of small humped cattle browsed under the sheltering fans of the mimosas and, as the scrub thickened at the foot of the hills, we came upon charcoal burners surrounded by blazing stumps and flocks of goats in charge of small naked imps.

The great thorns grew closer till they made above our heads a curtain splashed with the sudden scarlet of wings, or rent by the weight of creepers. Then we began to mount and the world spread out before us like a map. The track was narrow and scarred with boulders, in places almost perpendicular, and it twisted and doubled back on itself, till we saw the path we had traversed as a series of incredible spirals, dropping from rock to rock below. The mules slipped and staggered. Twice the ropes broke and loads crashed down between the stones, while the beasts lashed themselves free.

We made slow progress, for at every corner where the

track hung on the edge of space, a crowd of little gray donkeys overburdened with sacks of coffee, slithered helpless amongst us, adding to the confusion of our laboring beasts, and causing a storm of abuse from the drivers. When, for a change, the trail pitched downwards between torn-up roots and under hanging boulders, we walked, for it seemed that at any moment the saddles might slip over the mules' heads. Once, as Jones remounted, the girth broke, and he fell backwards on to his shoulder. The Abyssinian harness is as frail as it is clumsy, and every strap is knotted, mended and reinforced with string, except where its discrepancies can temporarily be forgotten under a saddle-cloth.

Suddenly we found ourselves on top of the last ridge, and with a glance backward at the blue of cupped valley and wooded mountain, sweeping down to the plain beyond Dire Dawa, we saw before us the plateau, a tame land of cultivation with the sheen of a lake between thatched mushroom huts. Flowering Euphorbias and cactus bordered our way. Flocks and herds rested in the mid-day heat wherever stacked sugarcane or durra offered them shade. Men and women were sleeping with cloths thrown over their heads and, one after another, our escort pointed out that the climb had been steep! The blackest soldier, a second Gabra Gorgis, who was an engaging ruffian with a scar from temple to chin, muttered something about fever. Another was more honest. "We are all tired," he laughed, "because yesterday we drank too much *tedj*. We sang all night and we're sad this morning."

Balla Lake drifted into a haze which shimmered over the scattered villages, fungus rings on the slopes, sur-

rounded with hedges of euphorbias twenty feet high. After about seven hours' march, we arrived at another lake, Arameya, its waters ruffled by a sudden wind and laden with duck. There were red-eyed spoonbills, huge bald-headed coots, divers which seemed to have no heads at all, and quantities of waders, black and white birds, stepping daintily on spidery pink legs.

Enchanted by its pictorial possibilities, we camped on low ground near the water, surrounded by poplars which formed inadequate shelter against the wind. Gabra Gorgis had been buying food along the way, a gourdful of milk, a thin chicken. Now he collected a few stones and an armful of wood, and having piled everything round him in apparently inextricable confusion, in half an hour he produced a marvellous meal. After the third course, which, if it was the athletic fowl, was most intriguingly disguised, we ceased to feel hungry. Jones produced the inevitable pipe—he only took it out of his mouth to eat or when his face was glued to the back of a camera—and I one of my last treasured cigarettes. We talked of the wonderful pictures we were going to take till the sun went down and a gale threatened our tents.

The soldiers and muleteers had established themselves on the lee side, waiting for their feast of sheep. Whenever a caravan starts on a long journey, the escort claimed the sacrifice of a sheep to bring it luck. In Abyssinia it really is a sacrifice, for the animal is led into the middle of the circle, its throat is cut, and before the body has stopped quivering, half a dozen knives are slashing at flank and quarter. The raw warm flesh is disposed of in a few mouthfuls, and five minutes after

the initial knife-stroke, there is nothing left but the bones and the blood smeared on cheeks and fingers. I saw Omar lead a sheep towards the group near my tent, and fled precipitately into the darkness!

It was a miserable night. As the escort were without shelter, we were obliged to share our blankets. By eleven it was bitterly cold, and the temperature dropped lower with every hour towards the dawn. We had not expected mosquitoes in such a wind, but we found the tents full of them—"As big as rats," said Gallan, upsetting himself into the net. I got up a dozen times to conduct a wholesale slaughter, and still more often to see if there was anything else I could put on. The soldiers coughed themselves hoarse on the other side of the canvas and, between spasms, intoned what I imagined were tragic dirges, but I could not understand their Amharic. We were all glad when the dawn came, though Jones and I, stamping round and round, muffled to the chin, while we ate stale bread and hard-boiled eggs, tried to conceal our shivers, and ended by comparing bites!

In the shelter of a cactus hedge, squealing, kicking, the mules were loaded. We set off down the broad path between millet stalks and plough. We passed threshing-grounds where men beat the grain with flails and small walking haystacks that resolved themselves into overloaded donkeys. The road was full of traffic, chiefs on horseback surrounded by rifles, men on mules, men on foot, all hastening to meet Dejezmatch Imaru, or to watch him pass. A personage with a gold-bordered cloak passed on a white Arab pony. I turned to look at the spearmen who ran behind. "They're far more

effective than guns——” I began, but the sentence was never finished, for my mount, objecting, plunged sideways, the girth broke, and in an avalanche of saddle, water-bottle and haversack, I pitched head first into a bush. A babel of voices followed me, a scurry of running feet, but it was the mule’s heels which brought me out, unhurt, but a pincushion of thorns, which Gabra Gorgis extracted one by one, a new condolence with each.

The morning offered no further incident, and by noon we were camped amidst coffee plantations on a shelf of ground overlooking Harrar. Pepper trees provided shade for the tents. A path bordered with wild rose and lilac slipped steeply to the mass of old walls, golden brown and crumbling, that were built in the 15th century. Further away the white modern buildings lay in a splash of sunshine, their towers piercing the mountain mist.

Just outside our camping ground, divided from it by a bank of flowering creeper, a stream widened into a pool. Here most of the population seemed to be washing either their clothes or themselves. Ebony figures were silhouetted stark against the water. Hides, spread in convenient hollows, provided tubs full of lather, wherein women rinsed and pounded till the whole ground was covered with white heaps of linen. It was spread on the hedges, flung across branches, laid out on bank and furrow. Long strips were held down by urchins. Cloths dripped from every wall. As we went down to Harrar, each angle of the stream, each ditch held its quota of washing. Every human being was scrubbing some scrap of cloth. We demanded expla-

nation as women hurried past us, dripping piles on their heads, smell of soap preceding them, and learned that it was the eve of Timkat, the great feast of Epiphany, when, from all the churches, the Arabs would go in procession to the pool for the yearly blessing of the water. Everyone must have a garment, "white without reproach", and everyone must struggle for a few drops of the holy water.

Ethiopia has been Christian for nearly 1,600 years, and as the Champion of the Faith during centuries of struggle with Islam, she claims not only an older but a purer conception of it. Legend has it that Makeda, Ruler of Axum, was the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon 1,000 years before Christ. By him, she had a son, Menelik the first, the ancestor of the present reigning house, and the originator of Judaism in Ethiopia. He was educated at Jerusalem until he was eighteen, and the Abyssinians believe that, when he returned to Axum, this founder of a three thousand year old dynasty brought with him the Tablets of Moses, perhaps even the Ark of the Covenant in which they were kept. There is a story that the original tablets are preserved in the old capital, and another that the Ark is buried somewhere below its walls. In any case, every orthodox Abyssinian Church has a copy of the Tablets of the Law and at the feast of Epiphany, the arks that hold them are borne in procession through the town.

At sunset we stood on the hill above our camp and watched the crowds swell up towards the red-draped shelter prepared for the Tablets. From a distance it looked as if the sands had blossomed. The sound of drums, shrill pipe music and triumphal songs came up

from the gardens where the bloom was like golden butterflies and Canna lilies stood guard against the bougainvillea. Slaves hurried by with the last bundle of rugs for the tents of the devout. Women followed, carrying baskets of bread, or calabashes on their heads. The drums rolled nearer, and from every side came priests, monks and deacons, rosaries at their waists, the crutches on which they lean during the long church services carried by excited followers.

The mob seethed and eddied till it was like a sea in foam. Suddenly the songs merged into a cry of adoration. Every figure seemed to fold up, as, with heads bowed to their feet, they acknowledged the approach of the arks. Very slowly between the trees came the lute players and the monstrous barrel drums. Horns flashed up above the rifles of the escort, and amidst clamor of voice and music, eddy of gun and spear, there swayed, like poppies, the gorgeous velvet umbrellas gold embroidered, lilac and red and purple, under which walked the arch-priests. The sunset picked out the gold in each flaming vestment, blazed on the square carved crosses, lit every fringe and bauble. Against the mass of color in which silk and velvet and jewelled embroidery ran riot, the censers swung their trail of smoke, the mighty crosses swayed.

Between the poppy heads that were umbrellas, two figures, their humanity smothered in the stiffness and the richness of brocade, bore the Tablets on their heads, covered in exquisite stuffs so that nothing could be seen but their shape.

Unnoticed, the sun went down behind the hill, but in the hollow where the tents were pitched as close as mush-

rooms, the clamor swelled again. The arks of the Trinity and our Saviour passed down towards the pool and behind them walked the Governor Imaru with his chiefs and his soldiers. For a moment I thought the sunset was reflected on another wave of white which surged up from the town, but a thousand welcoming voices cried, "St. Michael!" The third ark passed on to join the glamour of gold and jewels beside the water.

As we walked slowly back through the coffee trees, we could see the last procession, Saint George's, winding down the mountain from the Church on its crest. To the age-old cry of women, that gurgling ululation that is the throb of Africa's rejoicing, it came, a Christian token against a setting of pagan violence. There was a fight now in the valley, but nobody knew why it began. A man staggered out with a bleeding head. A scrum of struggling figures swayed round the original combatants.

All night long the drums crashed from the hillside, while the priests kept vigil beside the arks, and the devout watched and prayed and ate thin sheets of Lenten bread, the great men in their tents, the soldiers beside their stacked arms, and the poor rolled in their newly-washed rags.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS.

IT was impossible to sleep in our camp, so we breakfasted in the dawn grayness, and, as soon as the light was good enough for photography, posted ourselves on the bridge across the stream. Already a crowd lined the banks and a group of gorgeous vestments were reflected in the pool beyond. The chief priest wore a violet velvet mantel, yoked with gold, over a grass-green robe and a violet petticoat. The two deacons who held the missal in front of him, were scarcely less magnificent in primrose yellow, gold and blue, while every color of the rainbow, from magenta to orange, blazed under the flower umbrellas. The scene was set in a natural amphitheatre, with the hills rising behind, and very soon each slope burgeoned with figures like manna whitening the desert in an hour.

There was silence while ministrants and worshippers waited for the arrival of the Governor, and in the morning sun, if the glamour had faded, there remained one strong impression—a warrior people, each colorless figure armed with a rifle, simple as the robes they wore, and primitive as the rocks which gave them birth. Against this simplicity, half childish, half prophetic, blazed the splendor of the Church which rules Abyssinia, holds much of the actual land in fee, and dictates alike to monarch and peasant.

As soon as Governor Imaru left his tent and came down to the bank accompanied by officials and officers, the deacons began chanting the service. Smoke rose from the censers. Once again the crosses were lifted. A score of acolytes, tiny figures in fringed velvet mantles, rang their bells and shook rattles of brass, such as were found in the tombs of Egyptian kings. Slowly the chief priest bent over the water, dipped his cross in it, at the same moment, the crowd bowed forward till their lips pressed the ground. In a cup of carved gold, the water was brought to the Acting Governor, and then, as he and the sombre court which surrounded him moved away, there was a rush to the stream. Boys flung themselves into it, the banks threatened to give way under the throng who struggled to fill flasks and gourds. From the hills, from the space below them, crowds raced hot-foot to the pool, jostling and fighting for a few drops to pour on their heads, till at last there were more people in the water than on land!

By this time it was eight o'clock, and the sun was gaining strength. Fortunately the Governor invited us to watch the dance of the priests from his tent, a huge, open-fronted pavilion spread with carpets. Imaru sat in the centre, his cloak flung open, showing its crimson border, and on each side of him crouched his suite, crosslegged, amidst folds of black satin. The crowd was massed on either side, and for an hour we watched the greetings of a hospitable, gracious people blessed with much dignity of manner.

When a chief came to salute the Governor, he bent one knee till it touched the ground, and bowed his forehead in front of it, but the action was completed in a

single sweeping movement, with hardly an interruption of the stride. A priest with a high peaked turban and a black cloak over his glory of apple green and gold came to ask a question, and with a fold of his scarf held across his lips, he went to kiss the Governor's ankle.

When any personage is approached, courtesy demands that a piece of stuff should be held in front of the mouth as a protection against the contact of breath. Abyssinians of importance are reticent and insistent on a certain personal privacy, in the midst of the publicity of their general life, but they share with lesser folks a host of superstitions concerning the evil eye. At any moment when they might be taken unaware, a servant or friend interposes with a cloth or a piece of his own drapery. Thus, horn drinking vessels are preferred to glass, for it is not either correct or expedient that the mouth should be seen while drinking. When the Governor mounts his horse, when a chief kisses a friend, when the host pauses in his conversation during a banquet, in fact in the course of any action when a man's guard may be supposed to be relaxed, a white cloth, or the corner of any convenient *chamma*, is thrown over him by watchful servitors. So, while we were waiting for the arks to emerge from the straw temple where they had spent the night, while the priests were robing themselves for the sacrificial dance, I noticed men meet and part, sometimes with a series of bows, sometimes with a kiss, more often with hands joined and heads bent lip to ear, murmuring in monotonous reiteration, "How are you? Is it well with you? How are you?"

Are you well?" and generally a fold of cloak or robe was raised to give privacy to their action.

It was very hot even in the pavilion, when at last the acolytes announced the coming of the arks. With bell and drum, chant, horn and lute, they were borne out of the temporary tabernacle. The mass of color ranged itself against a background of pepper trees. In the centre were the men bearing the tablets on their heads, but they were obscured by the curtains of gold which looked like woven metal and fell stiffly to their feet. On either side were youths clad in purple, holding great silver caskets which had contained the morning's Host. The priests in black and white, the deacons in red and white, ranged themselves in opposing ranks and to the accompaniment of monstrous hide drums, they danced as David did before the Ark of the Covenant. With slow, swaying steps, never ceasing their chant, the long prayer sticks waving above their heads, they moved back and forth between shadow and sunshine.

Little straw umbrellas sprang up among the crowd; there was a rustle amidst the respectful rigidity of officials in the tents, the heads of the tiny acolytes nodded drowsily and the umbrellas drooped like the petals of crimson flowers. At last the drums quickened their measure, the rattles picked up the rhythm, and almost before Jones could readjust his camera the process of the night before reformed. Three arks went down the hill to rest in their various churches, but St. Michael's remained for another night of prayer.

We spent four days in our camp among the famous coffee plantations, to which Harrar owes the greater portion of her trade, and in the late afternoon we used

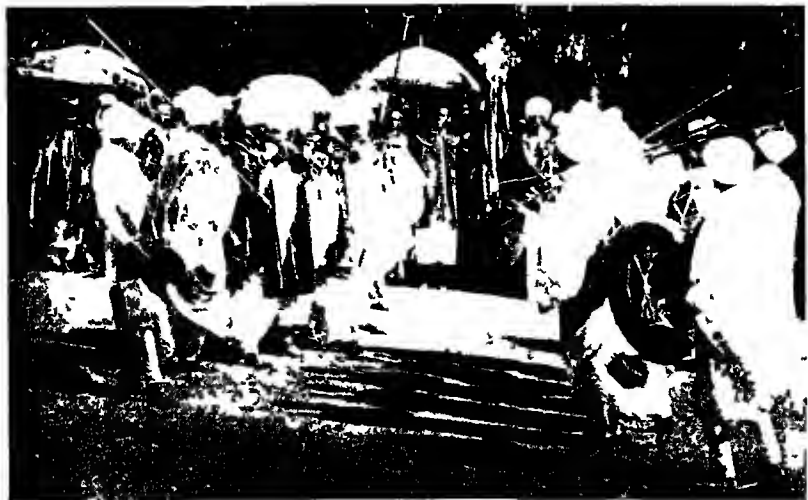
to go down to the old walled town which has withstood so many assaults, won and lost so many battles during the eleven centuries of struggle between Arab and Ethiopian. Harrar was the capital of Hadiyeh, one of the seven provinces of an Arab empire founded in the 7th century, and, though at different periods she was ruled by the Turks of Yemen, by the Gallas and by Egypt, she never fell to Christian Abyssinia until Mene-lik conquered her Emir in 1890. Sir Richard Burton made her the goal of his first East African exploration and, from his meticulous description, the town appears to have changed very little since he entered after an eventful journey from Zeila, to find himself confronted with a most unwilling host, the autocrat and Emir, Ahmed, descendant of Abu-Bekr. Still, at sunset, the five gates are closed, and though it is possible with diplomacy to pass out till 8 p. m., anyone who wants to go in after the keys are turned, must wait till the morning. Still the crumbling walls, sandstone and granite, with small round bastions, are mended with primitive cement and left in such a condition that any active robber could scale them without effort. Still the townsfolk have their own dialect, "Harari", which is not understood outside the immediate neighborhood. The women have their own particular dress, a black, short-sleeved abba, embroidered in red and worn over tight scarlet trousers, with the addition of a vivid red or petunia wrap, not unlike an Indian *saree*. Their hair gives the effect of being bobbed, since it flares out at the nape in a quantity of ringlets. They make gorgeous splashes of color against the white dress of the Abyssinians and the crowd of half-naked Somalis, the men clad



Against the mass of color, in which silk and velvet and jewelled embroidery
ran riot, the censers swung their trail of smoke



Blessing the waters at Hama



The priest danced as David did before the Ark of the Covenant



The descent into the old walled city of Harrai

in strips of leather or a chemise soaked in oil and worn till the last shreds fall apart, the women in brown rags with beads and horn ornaments, their hair drawn smoothly over the head and bunched in two closely netted rolls at the back of the neck.

The population of Harrar is still largely foreign, Somali, Arab, Negroid, a few Yemen Jews who are silversmiths, and a mixed race descending from Indian and other traders. There are also Gallas from the neighboring province, a people who overran Abyssinia in the 6th century, settled there, and, after generations of changing fortunes, during one period of which they reigned over the north from their capital at Gondar, were finally conquered by Menelik, creator of the present Abyssinia.

Because of these varied races and types, the markets of Harrar are unique. By way of the narrow blind-walled streets, where three people can hardly walk abreast, we climbed down a cobbled *suq*, roofed with matting or strips of linen, to a square where one complete layer of humanity seemed to be crouching round the varied wares it sold, and another, the buyers, seemed to be standing on top of it. Superimposed, apparently, for there was no room to move, were beggars of all kinds, lepers, the mere stumps of what once were men; swollen shapes of elephantiasis; the blind; the maimed; prisoners wandering freely except for their chains; couples handcuffed together, debtor and creditor, or accused murderer and nearest relative of the deceased, so coupled that the accuser may assure himself of the custody of the accused until the day of trial.

Further on we found the flesh market, half an

acre of straw trestles running from wall to wall, laden with raw meat, curtained with flies, and resonant to the clash of knives which the butchers used, not only to cut their wares, but to attract the attention of the circulating throng. The main square of the town is occupied by the customs yard with the Abyssinian flag flaunting its green, yellow and magenta above the herds of unloaded baggage-beasts, and the Church of the Saviour, an octagonal building crudely painted in red, blue and yellow, with some tawdry fretwork under the roof, which is surrounded by the orthodox square cross. Inside, the centre is occupied by the Holy of Holies, which only the priests may enter. Herein is the Tabernacle of the Ark, and before it mass is intoned amidst clouds of incense and a clamor of rattles. Round this central pavilion are two corridors, the inner of which contains a quantity of holy pictures, flags, screens and crosses, and the outer is so dirty as to suggest a chicken-run rather than an aisle.

Harrar also possesses the tomb of the Emir Nur, who, after a great victory (1559) over Christian Abyssinia, at which the Emperor Claudius was killed, surrounded the town with its present walls. The Moslem hero is buried near the largest and most ancient mosque, the Jamil, a barn-like structure of sandstone and clay cement. From its conical minarets we used to hear the cry of the muezzin just as the church bells rang out at the other end of the town. This at least is new since the days of Burton, when Harrar was one of the most fanatical of Islam's holy cities, but the inhabitants still anoint themselves with glue and chew *kat*—the leaf of *Cattula ædulis* which grows at an altitude of three or

four thousand feet, and produces three distinct mental stages, stimulation, restlessness and lassitude. I tried it once in Yemen and achieved no more interesting results than sleepiness and a sore throat.

From Yemen came the silversmiths of Harrar, and most of them are Jews, thrifty and hard-working, so that their shops are the only ones open in the hottest hours, but Harrar no longer sends her quota of slaves across to the Arabian coast. According to the Arab historian, Maqrizi, she used to provide the supply of black eunuchs for Eastern harems, and, fifty years ago, she was the mart of slaves from every part of Africa. An Eastern proverb runs: "If you would be rich buy an Abyssinian, if you want a brother (in arms) buy a Nubian, and if you require an ass, a Swahili."

In those days the population of Harrar was quoted at 8,000. To-day it is 45,000, and, besides the staple coffee, she trades in tobacco, oil of civet (which is the basis for Eastern scent), saffron, which the Arabs use as a golden dye and their women as a cosmetic, tallow, gums and honey. By trusting to one's nose one could pick out all these forms of merchandise, for the scent of eucalyptus drifts with one into the town, the aroma of coffee meets one on the thresholds where women sort the beans, shaking them in shallow trays, and the odor of sheep's fat eddies round the markets.

Harrar is perhaps most picturesque from the hill paths above. Then its ancient walls with the little round buttresses, merge into the brown of the earth around, and its square windowless houses interspersed with thatched huts, provide a tapestry of amber light and shade. I used to go to the edge of our mountain

shelf at sunrise, and, crossing the wild lilac and passion-vine in fruit, and the tall, pink oleanders, I watched the town melt back into the ground from which it was built, till at last only Government House, the churches, and a few tin-roofed modern buildings stood out of the umber earth.

Our last day at Harrar was unexpectedly busy. In the morning, while I was trying to force into my one suit-case everything except clothes—of these I had none except the breeches, sweater and leather coat I rode in, and a skirt for social occasions—Alaka Desta, secretary of the Government and priest of St. Michael's, came to visit us. We had only one chair, which Gallan produced for our guest, while I sat on one of the film-cases, useful square tin boxes, four of which made an excellent table, in spite of the protests of our servants.

Alaka Desta spoke excellent Arabic, so we wasted ten minutes in compliments, before he announced, smiling and pushing back his peaked white turban, that he had brought Ras Tafari's answer to the wire sent by Dejematch Imaru on our behalf. Laboriously he translated the message from its original Amharic, his round black face a little anxious lest I should miss any of the Regent's graciousness. "It is my duty now," he added, "to do everything to help you. Tell me, what can I do," Ras Tafari's welcome was the open sesame to the treasure-house of Ethiopia. After the magnificent way in which he laid a province (besides being regent and heir apparent, he is Governor of Harrar) at our disposal, it seemed an anti-climax to mention such trifles as sore backs and broken girths.

In the end it was Alaka Desta who announced that

he would send with us "an official bearing a paper to which all the people would pay respect." We thanked him warmly, and wondered what the official would think of our camp.

In order to travel light—a difficult matter when the weight of camera and films is considered—our equipment consisted of two seven-foot single-fly tents with ground sheets attached, a couple of canvas stretchers, and two flea-bags, the canvas triply lined and made specially without any opening except a hole at the top through which to wriggle in. I always think the usual Wolsey valise encourages too many draughts! Whoever was writing was allowed the solitary chair, and, for the rest, we sat on the floor, used a suit-case as a table, and washed in collapsible rubber basins that folded to pocket size. A haversack each carried everything we needed en route, and light was provided—not too successfully—by candles in tin lanterns, which folded flat as a few sheets of paper. I don't think the whole outfit weighed more than one hundred pounds apiece, and it shocked every susceptibility of our escort, who considered importance synonymous with baggage bulk.

Shortly after the priest of St. Michael's had bidden us an elaborate and lengthy farewell, a message arrived from the Governor asking us to visit him. Jones backed out on the score of clothes, or their deficiency, so I went off with a couple of soldiers, and a list of all the "last moment" things that had to be done. Dejezmach Imaru lives behind the court house, and to reach his reception room, I had to pass through the hall where "guebers," feasts of raw meat, are given to several hundred guests.

My host received me at the threshold, attended by several Harrar dignitaries, and we talked through an interpreter, for the Governor is too shy to speak French in public.

When I left him the sun was slanting behind the hills, so I hurried to buy canvas water bottles for the trek, and a couple of hurricane lamps, since we were assured the wind on the mountains would be too much for even the most conscientious candle. I made a last inspection of the mules and personally tested every girth. Then I had to penetrate a maze of walled compounds to find the tentmaker, stand over him while he put the last stitches in the men's sailcloth shelters, then bear them away in triumph. I lingered to bargain with a hillman bearing poles, and to procure some sacks in which to wrap the cameras, to whose service a special mule was dedicated. Consequently it was dark when I climbed up to the gateway, and an argument as to whether the bars could be undone for us or not, delayed us still further. During the course of it, a man fell suddenly at our feet. Whether he had been walking along the wall, or sitting on a roof, I don't know, but, with a crack like breaking eggs, he lay sprawled in front of me, blood pouring from his head. "Come away, he is drunk," urged Gutta, the soldier who spoke three sentences of French, always at the wrong moment.

We were almost pushed through the gate, but, picking our way upwards between cactus and boulders, half a dozen figures reeled past us, blindly muttering. "Everyone has drunk *tedj* and is mad after the festival," remarked Gutta. "I think we two soldiers are the only

sober men in Harrar." I smiled at his appreciation of his own joke, but my thoughts were full of dinner, for it was eight o'clock, and our last meal had been a hurried one before the morning's photography. The mule quickened its pace as it turned into our avenue of pepper trees, but the camp looked unnaturally quiet.

Jones was developing a fraction of film and he called gaily from his tent. "It's first rate stuff." But I was too hungry to be interested.

"Why is there no fire? Where is Gabra Gorgis?" I asked the wistful Gallan, who was crouched on the ground, looking irritatingly helpless. "He sleeps," answered the boy doubtfully. I went up to a roll of white, unconscious beside the ashes, shook it, kicked it, half lifted it up, without any result. "He is drunk," said Gutta in a resigned tone. He certainly was drunk, and he had omitted to bring back any of the food he had been sent into the market to buy. We rifled his clothes for keys, unlocked his cases and began a grim search for sustenance. When the total result was a piece of stale bread and one tomato, Jones suggested the cold water cure. We poured buckets over the head of the white bundle, but it had no effect. "Can you cook anything?" asked Jones, doubtfully. "Yes, if there is anything to cook." I retorted, "but what on earth has he done with the stores?" They were hidden under the prickliest hedge, but we did not discover them till the morning. At this moment Gutta volunteered to raid the nearest hut for eggs and, after half an hour, during which there was a good deal of distant squawking and barking, he returned with three. I made an omelette,

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and Gallan insisted on adding some onions which he had tied up in a corner of his *chamma*. It was a very good omelette, and I saw no reason why Jones should mention that the chief export of Abyssinia was leather!

CHAPTER IV.

HOSPITALITY IN THE MOUNTAINS.

WE left Harrar at 7.30 a. m. on a perfect morning, but in Abyssinia one cannot comment on the weather, for it is always brilliant, except in the season of regular rains—June to August—and during the heavy storms of February or March. Two days' riding in the mid-day sun which has the force of a blow, had flayed my face, and reduced Jones to the color of raw meat, but that morning there was a breeze scented with eucalyptus, and the muleteers sang as they coped with the strategic obstinacy of their charges. For the 369 mile march to Addis Ababa our caravan numbered seventeen all told, with a dozen baggage mules and four saddle ones, in addition to two really good beasts, presented at the last moment by Dejezmatch Imaru. Though they were not much to look at, they were as a Rolls-Royce to a Ford in the way of paces. Mine was white with a violet velvet saddle-cloth, embroidered in silver and petunia. The harness was covered with velvet sewn with marigolds, the pommels were gaily painted, and there was a collar of silver fringe. Jones' mount was scarcely less exquisite, in trappings of olive green and rose, and both mules actually answered to their bits, and even trotted when required! The Abyssinian bit is an instrument of torture. It consists of an iron ring which, at the least

touch on the reins, is driven up into the roof of the mouth, cutting it open, so that it is quite common to see a horse with scarlet nostrils, blood dripping from its jaw.

In addition to our own following of six muleteers, six soldiers, two servants and a guide, by Ras Tafari's orders we were accompanied by a provincial official, *Ballambarassi* Gabra Selessi. The *ballambarassi* was tireless, though he always looked weary. His thin face was surrounded by ragged hair which grew uncertainly, his head was shaven, his bloodshot eyes—all Abyssinian eyes are congested from sun and dust—fringed by a thicket of curly lashes, and his smile a mixture of dreamy diffidence and the longest of white teeth. Before the second march was over he explained that he had been sent with us because he was "gentle and quiet, never made a fuss or got angry like other Abyssinians." We found him unfailingly helpful and courteous, and his unconscious dignity was charming. He brought a retinue of his own. Three riflemen rode behind him, and four ran at his stirrups which he held between his toes. One servant carried his sandals, and knelt to put them on whenever his master dismounted. Another bore a gourd of bitter ale, which he dispensed to us all in horn cups, a donkey trotted along ahead bearing luggage, and a female slave brought up the rear with a kettle and a carpet. We suggested that she should ride one of our spare mules, but were told this would not be "correct."

In Abyssinia it is an offense punishable by death to trade in slaves, but domestic serfdom is allowed. During centuries of war the Ethiopians have enslaved their

prisoners, whether Moslem or pagan, and it is the descendants of these, as well as the prey of the last generation's commercial raids who constitute the legitimate slaves of to-day. In spite of Ras Tafari's efforts to abolish the transport and sale of human merchandise, slave caravans do occasionally slip down to the coast, and dhows transfer their miserable cargo to Arabia, but it is a dangerous traffic, though presumably profitable enough to warrant the risk. When I was in Yemen in 1923, Abyssinian slaves fetched a high price, and the harems of the Tehama were full of girls who could not speak a word of Arabic, so they could not have been long away from their native Ethiopia. Gabra Gorgis, who had a headache after his evening libations, announced that the lot of slaves was happy, for they had no money, and all trouble came from its possession!

We retraced the twelve miles to Arameya in record time, the pace being set by the Governor's mules, and the soldiers laughed at our hurry. "Are you on the way to Paradise, that you hasten so much?" demanded Desta, rolling his *chamma* into an immense turban. By this time we had decided that there were three nice soldiers and three who did not count. Of the first were Gutta, who had an amusing face, in which the corners of everything, eyes, nostrils and mouth turned up—he looked like a charming cat: the coal-black warrior with the old knife scar and more very white teeth than any other smile could show; and Desta, good looking, young and slim, with a girl's coffee-brown skin and a fashionable cut to his shirt. Of the remainder, two were close-shaven, hairless as an egg, and I never could distinguish one from the other, and the third was so inconspicuous

that nobody ever knew either his name or what he was doing.

Names are complicated in Abyssinia, for the first ones are chosen from the Christian martyrs with the prefix of Wolde (son of) or Gabra (slave of) so our cook, Gabra Gorgis was "The slave of (St.) George", and the *Ballambarassi* Gabra Selessi was Slave of the Trinity. Second names generally represent some quality, such as strength, courage, light, hope, glory, some equally estimable possession, cow, ox, shield, or natural beauty, such as tree, river, star. In great families there is sometimes a secret name by which every child is baptised, but which is only revealed to a privileged few. Gutta in Amharic means "full," but the catlike soldier assured me this was a misnomer. "I am too poor to be full. My inside is always hungry," he said, and stopped to pick a purple flower and stuff its petals up his nose. This is a common custom on the march, and we often saw hillmen with leaves protruding from their nostrils, while in the town markets you can buy tiny balls of raw, fluffy cotton for the same purpose.

We watered the mules in Lake Arameya to the great disgust of the ducks, and swung down between hedges of flowering cactus to a wide country, rolling up in a great sweep of down and brushwood to the foot of the mountains. The cultivation grew gradually less, till there were only rare stretches of cane or millet and a few acres of the plough which had long puzzled us, for it looked like the upheaval that would be brought about by titanic worms. We found the explanation when, by another lake, Adele, we saw a dozen men in three groups of four, "ploughing" by means of long, sharp poles with

a heavy stone on the top. With these they cut into the four corners of a two foot sod, levered up the edges, wrenched it from the earth and flung it over. By this means twelve lusty men could plough an acre in a day.

After clambering the hill beyond Adele we passed into a sort of crevasse which was perhaps once a deep water-course. Through this crack in the earth, bordered far above our heads by flowering shrubs, we rode in single file for about a mile, to debouch on to a rough slope with a valley below. "Kersa! That is Kersa where we camp," announced half a dozen voices, but I was not surprised at the further hour's march, for, in Abyssinia, several villages go by the same name, which really belongs not to any one collection of *tukels*, but to the whole district. Perhaps that is why no two maps agree, and none of them are much good to travel by.

We camped in an open stretch below the largest village, above which stood an actagonal tin-roofed pavilion that was the church. As it was still early (3:00 p. m.), most of our escort went to sleep, rolled like cocoons in their *chammas*. One of the muleteers, who was very fuzzy-headed, produced a piece of polished wood, slightly spoon-shaped, and proceeded to clean his ears! A couple of blacks retired behind their tent, a strip of canvas hung over a pole, one end of which rested on a pile of saddles, and one shaved the head of the other, meticulously, with a piece of broken glass bottle, after which he rubbed fat into it as a protection from the sun.

I wandered about the camp while Gabra Gorgis made coffee, watched a jackal lope away in half circles, saw two crested hoopoes rise with a flutter of zebra-striped

wings, and, as a few of the more important villagers approached our tents, decided that it was really very difficult to distinguish men from women. The Christian Abyssinian wears white cotton trousers and shirt, the former tight at the ankles, the latter long and loose in the skirt, narrow-sleeved to the wrist, and, in the case of the men, high-collared. The women's skirt is longer and fuller than the masculine garment, but both wear the *chamma*, a hand-woven cotton wrap three yards long by two to four yards wide, which varies in fineness of texture according to rank. I believe those of exquisite softness worn by the princes and princesses are worth several hundred dollars. A colored *chamma* is very rarely seen. A pink or blue one would merely indicate a desire to copy foreign fashions, but yellow denotes mourning. This may be the last relic of the saffron monastic robes, adopted by the widows of old who rent their clothes, rubbed themselves with ashes and shaved their heads. The latter custom is still followed among the old and disillusioned! Black is the fashionable mourning of the townsfolk, and black are the silk capes of the noble, the rough woollen ones of the bourgeoisie. These burnouses, sometimes lined or edged with scarlet, the former in the case of persons of distinction, are worn by both sexes, the men with the hood peaked over one shoulder, the women with it falling backwards. The *mateb* is a thin silk cord of various colors worn tight round the neck, often bearing an amulet or charm, which every Christian Ethiopian has worn since it was devised in the fourth century by the first bishop, Frumentius, to distinguish the faithful from the pagan. The *mar-ghet* is the fine-colored embroidery which borders the

chamma or chief or courtier, while the broad scarlet band on such a wrap is favored by the modernists, who appreciate the color because it was once the unique insignia of royalty.

Before sunset we went up to the village to see what the thatched mushrooms were like inside. The walls are made of cane, plastered on both sides with mud, and the roof thatched over a frame of poles tied together with leather, sticks out a foot or two all round. The floor is mud, so is the raised hearth, and sometimes there is a platform of earth on which is a wooden couch or one made of strips of hide on a wooden frame. There is no furniture except a rough stool or two, some grass platters and baskets, and a row of gourds. Often chickens, goats and a sick donkey or a cow in calf share the hut with the numerous family, the atmosphere is thick with fumes from a dung fire, and the smell incredible.

We were glad to get back to our tent and the half dozen small fires round which crouched the various units of our retinue.

"Have you bought any eggs?" I asked Gabra Gorgis, and the cook laughed.

"Eggs!" he exclaimed. "In half an hour there will be so many that you cannot walk." I looked at him doubtfully. "No, no, it is true," he insisted, "you are traveling under the protection of Ras Tafari. It is known, and the whole village will bring you food."

That evening was my first experience of *dergo*, as conceived by a hospitable village. I had been writing in my tent while waiting for dinner, and gradually it dawned on me that there was a good deal of noise in the

camp—squawks, bleatings, grunts, with a considerable human accompaniment. I looked out at last, and saw our tents ringed with a shadowy crowd. By leaping fire-light Gabra Gorgis seemed to be sitting under a haystack, the piled masses of fuel which the women had brought as gifts. Gallan was polishing my boots inside an absolute hedge of eggs—I don't think I had ever seen so many before. From all sides came the squawk of fowls, and I soon found that beyond the circle of lamplight one could not move without stepping on a warm, feathery bundle. The stars were still dim, so all I could make out among a mass of white figures were blacker shadows that were oxen, and dark patches that resolved themselves into goats and sheep. Sheaves of cane were piled beside our saddles, with hillocks of barley, while relays of women brought sour milk, baskets full of *tchako*, a paste made of oil, millet and red pepper, warranted to skin any ordinary mouth, and beer in hollow cows' horns a couple of feet long. For years I have been used to Arab hospitality, where a man must "die twenty deaths to save his guest, and cut up his body to feed him", but this procession of Ceres beneath the misty stars proved that the Christian East can vie with Islam in generosity, as the Christian West has never been able to do.

Under pretence of guarding the mules from the attack of hyenas, the soldiers and muleteers sat up all night eating raw flesh, and my last waking impression was a prolonged protesting squawk!

Next day we only marched five hours, but did a good deal of photography on the way. I believe the more primitive people thought we were performing a religious

rite and, later on, somebody asked Omar if the camera was our ark, evidently under the impression that cinematography was a rival faith! Some three miles out of Kersa, after climbing steadily, we found ourselves on the top of a ridge which commanded a view of hill and woodland like a crumpled cloth below us, and beyond them the sudden sharp white of the plain. We could see the wadi up which we came to Dire Dawa, and the roofs of the town, a splash of grey, while the horizon was barred by the far-away hills that guard Somaliland.

One hillock was crowned with ragged yew and olives, and the muleteers took the trouble to drive their beasts round it to avoid the graves of Moslem dead. "These are bad things," said Gabra Gorgis, fingering an amulet. "It is only safe at mid-day." The country rolled steadily upwards in round-backed ridge and down. Away to the left of us (and south) was the block of Gara Muleta, "the mount of beautiful view", and the path, in places wide enough to ride two abreast, but more often just a goat track, was bordered by clematis and kantuffa, which has a wisteria leaf and bunches of carmine flowers. Women were the main travellers, and each carried a gourd on her head, two in her arms, and a fourth slung on her back, together with great bunches of dark green shrub *geha*, from which they make an exceedingly intoxicating drink. A few were gathering a plant laden with shiny lemon balls, which stewed, make an excellent substitute for soap. The usual donkeys poured down with their loads of coffee, and occasionally a rider passed us with the greeting, "I salute you," to which we answered, "God bless you." Every Abyssinian travels with as much pomp as possible, and the small-

est village headman will not ride out without some spearmen or a couple of rifles behind him. This custom adds to the picturesqueness of the road, for even the poorest villager, mounted on his solitary mule, sometimes with his wife or a son riding pillion, has a small black boy trotting after him with his gun.

In the early afternoon we camped at Kolubi, between six and seven thousand feet up. Our tents were pitched between huge trees, and the slopes in front were covered with forest. Where there was a patch of pale gold, a youth was winnowing durra, by the primitive method of flinging spadefuls into the wind, which sent the chaff flying, while a boy with two wisps of straw brushed up the grain as it fell.

The usual sheep was brought, a monstrous black and white animal, and, before I could stop it, killed within a few inches of my tent. The men had the skin off it in a minute, and contentedly sat down to gorge in the nearest patch of shade. They hew strips off the raw carcass as it lies in front of them, and sticking these into their mouths, cut short at the lips any portion that won't go in with an upward stroke that endangers the nose. After a quarter of an hour they have the expression of carnivorous animals, sleepy, sated and blood-stained. A touch of humor is added to the scene by the antics of huge hawks who circle hopefully around, occasionally sweeping down to seize a morsel from the carcass.

I retired to my fly-haunted tent with some coffee and a heap of *anjera*, very bitter grey bread, made over a charcoal fire, and so thin that it has the appearance of muslin.

A few minutes later three shots rang out from

the *tukels* above us. "Are we being attacked, or is someone coming to visit us?" I asked Gallan, who was fussing round the door energetically doing nothing. "No, no, it is going to be a child," he replied.

Further inquiry elicited the fact that in some villages, a woman's labor is announced by rifle fire, a further salvo greets the appearance of the child's head, and a final shot denotes that the infant is safely in the world. "There is much sun to-day, which is bad," continued Gallan, and he explained that in childbirth, as indeed in illness, no ray of light must touch the sufferer, or death is certain, and therefore with all air and daylight excluded, a huge dung fire, on which quantities of incense are poured, in dense smoke, smell and sweat the woman gives birth, while a vociferous female crowd murmur the *abbiet mariam* and offer the victim doses of *berberi*, the fierce sauce which almost blows the top off a European head.

Later on she is given butter, honey and emetic, and, by starlight, the after-birth is buried under the threshold so that the boy may ever remain in possession of his heritage, but if it is a girl, it is buried beyond the compound, because a woman's fate is outside the paternal roof.

The moon had risen when a woman peered into my tent, a newly-born infant tied up in a goatskin hung with bits of bone as a protection against the evil eye. In her hand she held a long cow's horn, its point pierced and wrapped in a fragment of bladder, which I understood was presently to officiate as the child's bottle. Meanwhile it was a collecting box into which I dropped a dollar, before it went off round the village collecting small

coins, the infant being exhibited at the same time, so that there should be no doubt about its being a real boy and worthy of support from the district which would enjoy the fruits of its future toil.

That night the camp was unusually quiet. Omar had fever, and was rolled in a disconsolate heap by the fire. As he was a Somali Moslem, he was not popular with the rest of the caravan, who assured me that he was really suffering from his inability to procure any more *kat*, on whose stimulation his nerves depended. Jones was also on the sick list with a sun headache. When I went into his tent with a couple of aspirin tablets, he offered me in exchange "some first-rate stuff for sunburn—stop the irritation at once." My neck felt as if it had been branded with hot irons, so, though his lamp was out, I did not discourage him fumbling in the chaos of a haversack.

"Here it is," he exclaimed, producing a sticky tube, "you'd better put it on at once."

I thanked him and went out into the starry darkness. Sitting on a stone and tenderly anointing my neck, I reflected that desert night had a spell which the mountains lacked. Above me the sky was powdered with a silver dust, but it was very far away, and the wind soughed among the trees. The desert night is magically still, and its skies are molten metal seared with flame. At this point it occurred to me that my neck was also seared. Stumbling to the nearest fire, I looked at the tube that Jones had selected in the dark, and found it was carbolic tooth paste!

The quietness of the camp struck me as ominous when I woke next morning. It was only five, but the *ballam-*

barassi had suggested a series of fairly long marches in order to arrive at Kunni on the fourth day, so I went shivering into the greyness. Nothing stirred, and even when I shook the rolled white bundles lying casually around, they only groaned and writhed into crooked discomfort. "What on earth is the matter?" I asked Omar, who had apparently recovered. The guide threw up his hands.

"They ate too much raw meat, and they have taken strong medicine."

In despair we pulled a few of the sufferers to their feet. Pallid and bent double, with sweat on their brows, they tottered about in confused futility.

"Where is the *ballambarassi*?" I demanded, looking down at the silent tent which was generally the first to hum with bustle of departure.

"He, too, has taken a purge,"¹ said Omar sorrowfully.

Doubtless if it had been later in the day my sense of humor would have come to the rescue, but it was cold, and I was hungry, and the livid creatures I had roused were all collapsing in the nearest furrows, so I swore my best Arabic, and Omar looked at me appreciatively.

"A pity you are not a man," he said reflectively, "then you could beat them."

Four hours later, while the mules were being loaded by a set of ghosts, the headman of the village came up with a charming smile. "You will be able to travel soon," he remarked, "for all the animals are out of the men's bodies."

The sun was blazing when we clambered down from

¹ The purge is almost a rite in Abyssinia, and it is always adopted after raw meat feasts.

Kolubi into a grove of mighty zigbar and teyl trees. A ledge wound round the mountain, so that we had a view of woodland patterned with flowering shrubs and pierced by grey skeleton firs to the still visible plain, mist-blue now like the sea.

"Lately many of the trees have been cut down because of brigands," said the *ballambarassi*; "they used to lie in wait here and ambush the caravans."

"Under your protection," I interpolated, "I am sure we are safe from brigands."

Gabra Selessi smiled and pointed behind me. "We have many rifles with us now," he said, "and there are as many more with the baggage."

Our caravan was swelling daily, and it was impossible to keep track of the various headmen and villagers who rode with us to the end of their land and departed with deep bows. Desta explained further about the brigands. "Before the railway came there were many robbers in these mountains, and they were fat"—this with a gesture indicating enormous proportions, "but now all money goes in the train, and up here the brigands have to work hard for a living!"

After marching for some eight or nine miles, we were met by *Ballambarassi* Alamaya, and the headmen of the Chalanka group of villages. In their thick peaked capes and wide-brimmed felt hats, with folds of muslin hiding all but their eyes, they looked like gunpowder-plotters. After elaborate greetings, they wheeled their mules behind us, and we went in procession through the circles of *tukels*, to part with renewed bows and compliments at the foot of the next rise. I noticed that when we passed a stave set in a pile of stones, with a strip

of white cloth fluttering from it—the token of a church out of sight on the hill—all the riders dismounted, and with hats sweeping the dust, saluted the symbol.

Thereafter we rode over a succession of steep ridges, with stretches of cultivation in the valleys between. Omar found a field of his beloved *kat*, the soldiers stole sticks of durra, and Gabra Gorgis, who had a culinary mind, implored us to eat a few seeds of *shimbura* which taste just like nuts, or the *talla* grains, from which the natives make a sort of sweet soup.

In a field of *suf*, bright golden flowers, from which oil is crushed, we passed a Galla bride and bridegroom, accompanied by a few spearmen and a crowd of gurgling women, fillets of leaves in their hair, branches in their hands. Unfortunately they fled as soon as we set up the camera, so our only “bag” was the little bride, her coffee-berry skin glistening with oil, a cheap red cloth wrapped round her. Among the southern Gallas, the bride’s father has the right of choosing his daughter’s dowry from among his friend’s possessions. At the date of betrothal, he goes from hut to hut demanding such and such a gift, ranging from a particularly roomy gourd to the fattest black and white sheep, but always remembering that, from him in due time, his friends will claim for their daughters the equal to what they have given.

It had been decided that we should camp at Deder, a large village which did not appear on our map, but which could not have been more than eighteen miles from Kolubi as the crow flies. Unfortunately in Abyssinia everything is always much further away than it looks, for the track twists like a snake, flinging itself at im-

possible ascents, squirming down between masses of rocks that have the appearance of a muddy sea, frozen in the middle of a storm. All day long, one is either clinging to the pommel, while one's mount staggers perpendicularly upwards, or balancing, feet out of the stirrups, for fear of being crushed between boulders, while a series of jerks and slithers precipitate one downwards.

There is no peace with a mule caravan in Ethiopia. Besides the surprises which every corner holds, the avalanche of donkeys, the camel caravan which has knotted itself into huddled confusion and which (is it the smell or the sight?) sends every mule into hysterics, there is a never-ending vocal accompaniment. For the first few days one is afraid of a battle at any moment, so furious are the shouts, so violent the gesticulations, but probably it is a friendly argument as to which is the best track, or what is the right price to pay for sandals. If one asks a question of anybody, the whole caravan cheerfully disputes the answer at the top of their voices, and if the silence has been at all prolonged—say five or six minutes—they intone curious, tuneless rhymes. One of the *ballambarassi's* servants used always to march with a cooking-pot on his head, and it fitted him very well, like a brimless hat. His companions never could resist playing a tattoo on it as he passed, but the very best opportunity for noise was when (most unwillingly) we assisted in the recapture of a runaway slave. We were within sight of Deder and had just clambered up the worst series of rocks we had yet encountered. At the top a dignified but dishevelled person accosted us with the tale that his serf had suddenly thrown down his load and bolted into the woods. The

soldiers went after him like hounds and, from their expressions, I almost expected them to give tongue. We were forced to follow, but fortunately the chase was short, and neither master nor slave exhibited much emotion when, still arguing, they continued on their way.

CHAPTER V.

CHIEFLY MULES AND MARRIAGES.

DEDER seemed to me the first of our mountain camps, not because it was higher than any others—according to my aneroid, the altitudes on this trek varied between 6,000 and 8,000 feet—but because the tents were pitched on such a slope, that everything slid gently out of them. I went to sleep with my feet hanging over the edge of the stretcher, and woke with a bump to find that myself and the flea-bag had followed them.

By this time, reversing the usual proceeding, we used to dress at night to go to bed, and undress in the morning for the long hot ride. Consequently, muffled in jerseys, scarfs, a coat or two and a mule blanket, it was rather difficult to extract myself from the narrow canvas. I had just done so when there came a crescendo of grunting squeals, a stampede of hoofs, shouts, a shot, and more squeals. Seizing a revolver, I burst out of the tent to see a dark mass scudding into the night and a confusion of blanketed shapes.

Desta dashed past me with a rifle. "Hyenas!" he shouted, and the next moment something loped clumsily out of the shadow. I had a shot at it, but missed, and then every one seemed galvanized into sudden action.

"If you waste any more ammunition, the whole vil-

lage will come to the rescue," I remonstrated with Gutta.

"Let them come and find our mules," he retorted.

We spent the rest of the night looking for the beasts, and started in the morning with two short. As we rode through an exquisite valley where the forest trees were burdened with clematis, orange honeysuckle and a flaming scarlet creeper, I preached on the subject of the old Arab saying, "put thy trust in God and a rope on the leg of thy camel," but learned that the mules had torn up pegs and broken heel ropes.

"Two things bewitch them," said the *nagadi*, "camels and hyenas." It was the longest speech I ever heard him make.

We had a good cinema "bag" that morning, for in one place we had to climb on hands and knees, while the mules sidled up sideways—I am sure they have crab blood in their veins. While Jones was turning the handle down below, some Gallas passed and, with hands clasping the most potent of their amulets, they bowed to the ground to propitiate the unknown power!

After this the track wound monotonously through the valley of Burka, beside whose stream we lunched. To reach the only shady tree we had to cross a deep ravine and Omar was so anxious to help us that he pulled at the wrong moment, precipitating Jones and himself into the water. The rest of our followers cast themselves, shrieking, to the rescue, and each seizing an end of their victims' clothes or one of their limbs, dragged and pushed with such lack of unanimity that Omar was nearly drowned and Jones reached the bank coated with mud. It fell off him in cakes as we left the valley in

the afternoon blaze. Shortly afterwards one of our lost mules was recaptured and branded in front of us with an iron thrust into a charcoal-burner's fire. I had hardly got over this unexpected sight, when, clambering up between slippery boulders, which necessitated an infinity of heaves and twists, one of the baggage beasts fell, failed to rise under the weight of its pack, slipped horribly and broke its leg.

For a moment the babel was deafening, and then I realized that the muleteers were trying to beat the wretched animal to its feet. Seizing Demessi's rifle, I plunged down the rocks, prepared to shoot the beast myself, but the *nagadi* interposed with a knife. "Why waste good bullets?" he said. While I was still stuttering at him in the middle of an avalanche of cast loads and resentful hoofs, somebody came to the rescue with a couple of shots. The storm of protest and explanation spent itself in a perilous reloading.

It is curious that the Abyssinians have so little consideration for animals, for they are kindly in their dealings with their fellows, and, in the south, where they are used to contact with strangers, hospitable in their relations with them. Constantly small gifts of milk, durra, bread, or ale were offered us by passing villagers without any apparent expectation of reward. The muleteers used to pick sugar-cane or millet as they passed and the owners, working, half naked, in their fields, laughed and wished them a good journey.

At certain stages, when the track was so steep that the loads had to be lightened, we were obliged to rely on local porters, and these were recruited in the most arbitrary way. The soldiers would see some men loung-

ing in a village, go and pull them to their feet and, amidst cheerful protest, dump anything from a tent to a tin of paraffin which always leaked, on to their shoulders. With remarkable good humor, the hillmen carried such burdens to the end of their districts when a new set of porters were requisitioned. If we gave them the smallest coin, they thanked us profusely and kissed our feet. The Abyssinian manages to do this with a shy, swift dignity that is very attractive.

The *ballambarassi* told me that in olden days any stranger might claim the right of transport through the village lands and that the custom still held good in the mountains, but I think much was due to the munificent orders of Ras Tafari, with whose firman we traveled.

The fourth night we spent at Tullu, a district of small hovels, wide spread over the slopes round a valley, where table-top mimosas sheltered our camp. The muleteers grumbled over the loss of the mule, insisting that we marched too far each day. Gabra Selessi, the kindest and most patient of companions, explained that the *nagadis* consider a five hours' march sufficient in mountain country, and they cut it short at midday, idling through the afternoon, eating their one solid meal at night, but he comforted me with the courteous assurance: "My only desire is to march as long as you like, to stop whenever you wish, and to make all things easy for you."

That night I made sure that the mules were safely tethered, doctored Gallan to the best of my ability for an ailment which gave him a temperature of 102, and which he thus described: "A mule stood on my foot and gave me a pain in my thigh, so now my head bursts,"

and, coming back to my tent in starlight, heard Omar's voice describing his vain search for food among the *tukels*.

"They are not people in this district, but hyenas," he was saying. "The instant they saw our rifles, they ran away, shrieking. It was useless that we followed crying: 'Of your kindness sell us a few eggs. By your pleasure! Do us a favor. We shall be grateful, Allah bless you.' They did not wait to listen. The sight of us cleared the hill-side!"

I think the escort must have gone to bed hungry, for they were ready to start by seven next morning, an hour after I had shouted the usual reveille. The day's march consisted in climbing over two steep passes between which lay the valley of Hirna. The first was clothed in forest. We rode below curtains of strongly-scented purple creeper, with shiny green euphorbias lacing thickets of tall trees, their branches bearded with ferns and the froth of seeding clematis. Our pleasure was somewhat spoiled by the persistence with which one of the local porters waved in front of us a bunch of living fowls tied by their legs to a stick. At last I insisted they should be killed, and a fury of discussion raged. When, my vocal chords proving inadequate, I managed to inquire the reason by signs, I learned that all our porters were Gallas and either Moslems or pagans, and they would not carry anything killed by the Christian Abyssinians. "Well, let them kill the fowls themselves," I suggested, but Omar pointed out that our cook could not possibly handle any bird slain by an infidel's knife. The deadlock seemed absolute till it occurred to the soldiers that if they killed the birds and

put them into a sack, the Gallas might be induced to carry it at the end of a pole!

We spent an hour photographing the harvesting of durra, a picturesque scene, where black giants, nude but for a loin cloth, wrestled with the fourteen-foot stalks, and girls, supple as a Grecian frieze, bore away the grain in baskets on their heads. An old man passed, bent under a mass of empty gourds. They looked like bloated balloons frozen to his shoulders. He glanced wistfully at my white mule. "A good beast," he said, "he runs like water, but my feet are stones under me." A piastre cheered him considerably and he clumped away singing.

At Hirna, a large village, the market of the neighborhood, with a few Greek or Armenian storekeepers, we received a shock. It was barely noon and we were walking briskly, a cold wind in our faces, when Omar pointed out a medley of baggage and unsaddled mules scattered over the green. Closer inspection proved that the *nagadi*, taking advantage of our absorption in photography, had calmly camped for the day. Doubtless he thought the pitching of his shelter and the uncording of all the luggage, while his beasts wandered down to the stream, would convince us that another start was hopeless. His expression was a blend of amazement and disgust when I hustled the soldiers after the mules, had them driven in at a trot and ordered an immediate reloading. It wasted half an hour, but it taught the *nagadi* a lesson and we proceeded up the next ridge in what Abyssinia would consider silence!

In spite of all these delays we reached Debasso and a hillside thick with dog-roses in time to see the sunset

over Kunni, the mountain of forests. Round a blazing fire, our followers, each a little separate tent in his blanket, with only eyes and nose showing, roasted the durra they had stolen in the valley, and talked of their battles and, alas, their insides! At a cluster of huts near by, a wedding feast was in progress. The bridegroom was a Christian merchant from Hirna, so we were invited to drink *tedj* and eat *fet-fet*, little round pieces of meat steeped in the hottest of sauces. The guests, seated on the floor, with a spoon and a knife each, used sheets of the native bread (*anjera*) as table and napkin combined. The bridegroom, smelling strongly of scent and oil, was fed by the four groomsmen who sat one on each side of him, and they cut tit-bits of raw meat from the sheep hanging by its legs from a pole held by two slaves and pushed them into his mouth. Behind the shelter of a few yards of muslin, held up like a tent, some girls performed the same office for the bride. Once, when the bridegroom choked, two or three friends precipitated themselves to hide his face under their *chammas*. At intervals the women who feasted in an adjoining yard could be heard singing, and occasionally, without warning, some man leaped to his feet, emptied a cow horn at a draught, and holding it upside down, sprinkled the guests with the few remaining drops.

After a last *feu de joie* had wakened every dog in the neighborhood, the bride was led into the hut and seated on a couch while her father read a list of all her possessions beginning with two oxen and ending with a felt hat. Four times oil was sprinkled over her from a slender flagon; she sipped a horn of *tedj* from which



Primitive ploughing by means of long, sharp poles with a heavy weight on top



The roof is thatched over a frame of poles tied together with leather.



A village headman and his followers outside his hut. The walls are made of cone



Baking *anjeja*, very bitter gray bread, baked over a charcoal fire, and so thin it has the appearance of muslin

every one else drank in turn. Then the muslin screen was folded round her while she embraced or talked to her mother.

The number four is considered not only lucky, but almost sacramental, as the Fetha Negast states that there are four patriarchs, four gospels, four rivers in the terrestrial paradise, four winds, seasons and elements, and four quarters of the earth. Consequently the bride came out from her muslin screen with four branches of olive held over her and the same number of amulets hung round her neck. We wanted to wish her luck, but a fellow guest insisted that she must not speak to a stranger on her wedding-day, so we left her amidst the songs and the scented heat of her hut and went back to the camp fires. There were three of them and, in every one, bread was being baked in thin cakes spread on a stump and plentifully sprinkled with ash.

"To-morrow we shall be in Kunni," said Gutta, "and there will be whole trees to burn."

"Monkeys too," smiled Desta, "and I shall want to shoot them, but the lady will say they are beautiful and she loves them as a son, like the black and white ram at Deder, which she would not let me kill."

There was a general laugh at the memory of how I had crept out at night to release an engaging animal destined for a feast of raw meat. I went to sleep to the echo of native voices, for I think most of the country folk came in to sit by our monster fires and exchange fragments of dried meat, as stiff as hide, for the gossip of the road. I woke to the heaviest dew of the march. My boots were so stiff that it took me nearly ten minutes to stamp into them and my clothes were like a

sponge. I heard Jones come out of his tent, and then, after a clatter of tins, his voice sounded cheerfully, "They're dry as a bone!"

"What do you mean? Have you been sleeping on your boots?" I retorted crossly, as the second strap broke.

"The films, of course," answered my single-minded companion, rubbing his hands which were numb, though raw in places from the extremes of sun and wind.

The only other trial of this mountain trek was the lack of water. If there are large springs, they are hidden beyond ken of the villagers who drink from the *most appalling holes where cattle and goats wallow*, or from slow-running streams putrescent with slime. Most of the huts are built at a considerable distance from water, and often we had to send our men some miles into the hills to bring back a supply for cooking and drinking. Washing was out of the question. Sometimes, for three or four pence we could buy a gourdful of water, muddy and unpleasant both to smell and taste, but, after the first few days, we ceased to argue about the doubtful contents of our bottles.

"Shut your eyes when you drink and trust to luck," suggested Jones.

Fortunately there was always some sort of muddy ditch or pool where the mules could be watered if, during the day's journey, we crossed no streams.

The sixth day brought us to Kunni, two mountain masses sheathed in forest. All the morning we watched clouds slip over the dark summits, and at midday we rested under some olives to enjoy the view. Sunlight and shadow flickered over twin valleys, the large new

village of Sabatafero like a crop of mushrooms in the northern, a half dry lake gleaming in the southern. Reflectively peeling eggs, very, very hard-boiled, Jones and I congratulated ourselves on the beauty of Kunni and the morning's catch—some attractive scenes of Galla women pounding maize in huge earthen jars, half a dozen men flower-crowned, rethatching a *tukel*, and a crowd of oxen stamping the grain from straw. Omar interrupted us, "The *ballambarassi* wants to know the hour—his watch is asleep." Startled, I must have pinched the egg I held, for it shattered my complacency by erupting over me in yellow slime.

"Misfortune," exclaimed Omar, "it would soon have been a chicken!"

Jones choked and crushed his handkerchief to his nose. It was the worst egg of a long native experience, and it ruined my long-suffering breeches!

We camped on the ridge between the great forest peaks, because the *ballambarassi* wanted to be near the remains of what had once been a large village graced by a residence of Ras Maconnen, father of the present Regent. The majority of the people have now moved down to Sabatafero, wisely, I thought, after two tents had collapsed in the gale which blew over the pass. It was an unpleasant night spent chiefly in knocking in pegs and tightening ropes. In the end I gave up all hope of coping with the whirlpool of screaming canvas which strained the poles to breaking point. Miserably I dragged my flea bag into a sort of furrow below a bank, burrowed right down into its eight-foot length, stopped up the entrance with my pillow, and slept till a cow butted me gently to discover if I were edible.

There was a marvelous rose-pink light on the hills against which the trees were carved ebony, and a rime of frost on the grass. Jones and I took turns to nurse the coffee pot, the only warm thing in the universe. Generally we walked and rode through alternate hours, but that morning we tramped steadily till the sun melted the frost and the forest paths were jeweled, every creeper sparkling, the branches whispering beneath their weight of crystals. Down we went by crooked, stony paths, over tree trunks or under them. Occasionally a goreza, a large monkey, his black face surrounded by a white ruffle, slung himself whimpering over our heads, or a caravan of them, climbing heads to tails wheeled into the distance. Omar told us that the Gallas put down a pan of beer in some glade dear to the monkey heart, and when the inquisitive gorezas have sniffed and tasted sufficiently to make them drunk, they are easy prey for the watching spearmen.

After three hours' march we were passing the last trees, table-top mimosas with purple convolvulus clamoring up them. Behind us the mountains in their close-fitting mantle of forest, looked like rough velvet. In front was a wide sweep of grass, alternate plain and hill, with crests a little sharper than the English downs. Fields made a patchwork of gold where men flailed the barley with long-handled swingles, or of emerald green where bananas and coffee grew near a stream. Dotted through the cultivation were watchtowers that looked like flat beehives set high on bundles of stakes, a precaution against the depredations of wild pig.

By noon we were riding through Boroma, where the grass grew saddle high and our caravan looked like field

mice. Beyond the smooth, sun-kissed downland, the ridge of Lagardin loomed a misty blue that never came any nearer. We passed through Badessa, an ugly village of haystacks, windowless, but with low doors cut in the fourteen-inch thickness of the straw, where small boys play hockey with sticks of sugar-cane and the hard yellow fruit of amboy.

An hour later we realized that we had lost both luggage and muleteers. A furious search along the route we had traversed revealed the mules idling placidly on Badessa green and the *nagadi* entrenched in one of the haystack houses. I cut short the screaming which followed by a revolver pressed into the back of the nearest muleteer. Much surprised and a little amused, he trotted briskly round the recumbent beasts, adjured them to their feet, and we left the village—and the *nagadi*—in triumph, driving our caravan before us. All this of course had wasted much time and, as we were inexpert muleteers, we lost considerably more gathering stray beasts back to the fold whenever a patch of anything edible bordered the track.

At last Omar announced we had reached Habro, so where a clump of trees gave promise of water—a muddy black ditch that stank—we camped. It was pleasantly warm, but there was a fairly strong wind.

Jones and I, tired after our rodeo efforts with the mules, were drinking sour milk and coffee in his tent, when there was a shriek outside. It was feminine enough to be recognizable as the voice of Walata Sabat the *ballambarassi's* slave, and it was followed by a crackling roar which brought us out at once. Obviously the maiden had lit a fire on the edge of

the long grass which stretched for miles across hill and valley. There was a pile of corn cobs at her feet and behind her a sheet of flame. For a moment we thought the tents were threatened and, together with every member of the caravan, rushed headlong to beat out the blaze. Jones seized somebody's blanket, I a saddle rug. The muleteers had produced some hides—relics I suppose of their raw meat feasts, and the soldiers tore up roots and green branches, but the fire licked up into the wind and, scrunching joyously, ate its way up on to the hill, regardless of our efforts.

"There is no fear for the camp," shouted Gabra Selessi's headman, as the red torrent charred a stretch behind us and flooded slope after slope. Jones's natural instinct re-asserted itself! In a few seconds he had his camera out and, whenever I looked back from directing the salvage operations—there were thatched huts on the other side of the hill—I saw an eager, sunburned face, hair on end, peering over a lens always at some new point of vantage, while on all sides of it crazy figures were belched out of the smoke clouds, silhouetted for a minute against the glare, and absorbed once more into the whirl of wind, flame and shoulder-high grass.

Eventually Gallas from the neighboring villages came at a run. Amidst a turmoil of shouting, they cleared a huge space before the fire and, from the edge of this barrier, beat it into impotence.

"I say, I am afraid I upset the coffee getting my camera," said Jones, rubbing his forehead into blacker smears, "but it would have been cold anyhow!"

A figure, crouched in the lee of the tents, was trying to blow a few sticks into flame. "There can be no fire

in this wind," it muttered, and we realized that Gabra Gorgis's soul was entirely concerned with the tragedy of the wasted coffee!

We had passed two wedding processions that day which the cook had assured me was unlucky. He remembered his warning as, with charred hair and sweater, I went towards my tent.

"I told you that one thing may be good but the double of it is always bad!"

I laughed and dreamed of marriages and women.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING WOMEN.

AMONG the primitive people who originally inhabited the highlands of Ethiopia, paternity was of no value. Marriage was but a pact ensuring community of labor and of interests. The children born of such a union belonged to the mother and were known each by his or her personal name with no reference to their parents. The woman, providing she did her share of the work, was free to establish any relations she chose, and her children legitimate or otherwise, inherited only from her. The family did not exist, except as a matriarchate, so that the possessions of a brother would descend on his death to his sister's children because they were of the same maternal blood, not to the offspring of his wife who, in turn, would inherit from her people. These aborigines were associated in groups according to their work, free men and women without any difference of class, for they were all equally poor. They lived by hunting and agriculture with no idea of commerce until the Semites came from Arabia and intermarried with the negroid women. The problem of paternity became soluble by the paler skin, the result of such unions and the matriarchate gave way before the conqueror's conception of family. The liberty of the woman, hitherto unbounded, began to suffer restrictions, but, with memories of her old freedom, she

refused to accept more than temporary union with the strangers. Thus began the legalized respected concubinage which exists to this day and which, originally, was an improvement on the unrestrained polygamy existing among a people who lived and gave birth as carelessly as animals. With the dawn of Christianity in the fourth century the strength of the family was reinforced, but the patriarchate, in which the father was sole lord of his women, his children, his lands and his beasts, gave way to a feudal system based on force. After fifteen centuries the struggle between these two fundamentally divergent principles endures, but it is possible that the pressure of European influence with its doctrine of individual responsibility and equality, may prove equally disastrous to both.

Throughout the changing fortunes of Ethiopia the peasant woman remained in the anomalous position of a beast of burden with a complete system of civic and material rights. Moslem girls work until they are of marriageable age and after they are old, but during the years when they can bear sons to their race, they rarely leave the house. But to the Abyssinian woman falls the hardest of the communal tasks throughout a life which prematurely ages and destroys her. She is the hewer of wood and drawer of water, and as the villages are always distant from either, she toils for miles with incredibly heavy weights on her back. In Abyssinia each form of labor is exclusively masculine or feminine. For instance, no male being, even on the verge of starvation, could be induced to grind grain into flour between the mighty stones employed by his mother or wife. The woman prepares all forms of food and drinks, but she

would not dream of killing the smallest bird or beast for the kitchen. In the fields she may help in the reaping, but she may not sow the grain or drive a plough or the earth would become sterile! In her own sphere she has need to be an artist, since each detail of household life is complicated by custom. A chicken, before being offered at a feast must be divided into twelve parts, each suited to a guest of different rank. For an unimportant person to take a wing would be unpardonable and to help himself to the skin an offence to the mistress of the house whose portion it is. In the same way each section of ox or sheep is destined to a special use. The shoulders may only be used for soup, the head, feet, and intestines are the perquisites of the slaves, the ribs are offered to chiefs or the slayers of lions!

It is the woman who weaves the many colored baskets of straw, who brews *tedj* and beer, moulds the great terra cotta jars which contain them, and spins thread from the cotton fluff, but she cannot weave, which industry is confined to the male members of certain families and districts. Embroidery and sewing is also the work of men.

In life as well as in work, the sexes are separated by tradition. At banquets and other ceremonies, the master of the house entertains the male guests in one hut or tented yard, while his wife presides over a separate feast for the women. In churches a sheet is often suspended between the different portions reserved exclusively for men and women. In public the two sexes appear as nearly unconscious of each other as possible, unless they are relations meeting or parting. No affection is shown in public between husband and wife. It

would be scandalous for one to kiss the other or even lay an affectionate hand on shoulder or arm, yet kisses are the most common form of greeting in Abyssinia. Between relations of either sex, the kiss is full on the mouth and repeated quickly many times. Between intimate friends the manner of the embrace is the same, but it is numerically reduced or increased according to the intimacy which exists. Acquaintances kiss each other on the right cheek, clergy are saluted on the right shoulder, a chief on the foot or knee, while a dependent greeting a great lady kisses his own hand between each sentence.

Yet, if a husband returns from hunting or from war, his wife must not go to the door to meet him. She must wait inside the house and make pretense of being absorbed in her usual occupations. If she is of inferior rank, she may, when they are alone, bow to kiss his knee, but, if his equal, she must welcome him without even holding out a hand, to all appearance still immersed in her work.

To woman is largely entrusted the hospitality which is one of the fundamentals of Abyssinian life. Its conception dates from those prehistoric days when all means of existence were the common property of the groups which shared their labor and its fruition. It may be abused by needy minor officials, eclipsed where foreigners are concerned by a passion for gain, but I think it is never refused to the poor man, be he friend or stranger, who asks it in the name of Mary. The headman of each village is responsible for the payment of "dergo," the government hospitality accorded to important travelers, whether native or foreign. The amount is the-

oretically fixed by the rank of the recipient, but I imagine it also varies according to the generosity of the district and the industry of its women, who have to bake the *anjera*, brew the *talla* or *tedj*, mix the potent sauces and condiments, cut the firewood, draw the water (most necessary of all gifts) forage for eggs and, in the case of a prominent personage, cook a dinner of a dozen gargantuan courses, while the men content themselves with driving in a few beasts and supplying grain and grass.

This is the public hospitality levied as a tax by the central Government and by each provincial Ras or Dejezmatch. Private hospitality is often entrusted by a village to certain administrants chosen from among the most respected inhabitants. These hold their honored office for a term varying from months to years. They regulate the provision of food and fodder according to the means of each household, and distribute it, not only to strangers and travelers, but to any of the community who are in need. When a chief visits the districts this master of the ceremonies is obliged to make a special call on the local resources to feed servants and soldiers, but ordinarily his chief duty is to supply sustenance in cases of illness, child-birth, mourning, or any other eventuality which may deprive a family of its manual labor. In every occurrence of family life, the hospitality and coöperation of the village are assured. For instance, when a child is born, not only is all food provided by neighbors during the period of the mother's illness, but the household tasks are divided among them and they perform gratuitously the duties of midwife and nurse.

In the case of a marriage this reassured coöpera-

tion is even more apparent. Every one who is invited to a wedding is obliged to send a gift of money or livestock to the father of the bride. Its value must not be less than a dollar, but very often it is twenty or thirty times as much. As all such offerings either constitute or augment the *dot*, "it simplifies the problems of the father who would secure husbands for several daughters. It also encourages him to keep on the friendliest relations with his neighbors. The same gifts are made in the case of funerals in order that the bereaved family may be able to feed the numerous mourners, but they are really a form of loan to be repaid in kind when there is a marriage or a death in the household of the donor.

Apparently any number of calls may be made on the gratitude of a recipient, for, if he has received an ox as a wedding gift to his only child from a friend who is blessed with four daughters, he must return an ox of the same weight at the marriage of each of these. If on the day of feast an invited guest does not bring or send an offering suited to his position, he can be called before the local headman and fined up to twelve dollars.

As soon as a married couple arrive at a suitable age they are entitled to a portion of the family land, sufficiently large for its products to support them. This is chosen by arbiters appointed by the district, within whose bounds the husband has a right to cut sufficient wood for the construction of his house. Friends and relations carry this material to the appointed site. The bride, helped by the matrons of the village, prepares food and drink and, with no further recompense for their labors, the whole neighborhood combines to build

in one day, the dwelling which will also be stable and barn for the new family.

Thus from birth to death, the life of an Abyssinian villager, his tenure of the land and the assistance which he, in turn, must contribute to the general welfare, is as communal as the *tukel* he shares with livestock and fowls. Such patriarchal simplicity should develop an exemplary family life, but marriage forms, divorce, concubinage and slavery militate against it.

Marriage in Abyssinia may be the simplest and least binding of pacts or the most complicated or legal and religious contract. Legitimate unions between free-born and slave are regarded as disgraceful, especially in the case of a lady who espouses a serf. In such a case the woman would be reduced to the grade of her husband. Sometimes liberated slaves marry free men or women, but always subject to general disapproval. There are certain trades which do not marry outside their own ranks, possibly because they are suspected of necromancy or other evil powers. Of such are the jewelers and smiths, the players of violin, flute and lute. Should one of these artificers or musicians wed farmer or merchant, her children would be dishonored as having inherited the taint in the mother's blood.

An engagement in Abyssinia has as much solemnity as a marriage and, when the suitor has been accepted by the bride's father, he must produce at least one guarantor who is financially responsible for the completion of what is generally a diplomatic or commercial transaction. There are four kinds of marriages. The religious form, which is rarely adopted except by the clergy and by a few of the great families, is supposed to be

indissoluble except for certain causes enumerated in the Fetha Negast, such as:

1. If husband and wife agree to become monk and nun.
2. If one or other cannot have children.
3. If either is unfaithful, but such delinquency on the part of the husband has to be sufficiently public to cause scandal.
4. If either attempts the life of the other.
5. For epilepsy contracted before marriage and previously ignored by the other party.
6. If either becomes a leper or suffers from elephantiasis.
7. If either publicly and falsely accuses the other of infidelity.
8. If either is condemned to a long term of imprisonment.

In practice, with the consent of the *abouna* and the circulation of numerous Maria Theresa dollars, divorce after a religious marriage is possible, except for priests. In their case a difficulty sometimes arises if they have contracted marriages with minors, arranged by parents or guardians. Religious law demands the consent of both parties, so if the wife has been married as a child, she can, on attaining her majority obtain a divorce, should she desire it, on the ground that she was not responsible for the actions of her guardians. The husband has no alternative but to remain celibate or leave the priesthood!

The Fetha Negast is stringent in the limitations it

imposes on marriage. A woman divorced for infidelity can only remarry after performing a penance. Marriage is forbidden to dames of over sixty and a widow cannot take another husband until she has mourned the first for ten months. A father can force a dissolute son or daughter into matrimony and the virtuous maiden of twenty-five can insist on a husband and *dot* being provided for her. A second marriage is not approved and a third is considered so disgraceful that the offender is only admitted to communion three times a year. Man and maid may be wedded by letter or proxy, but a second marriage must be accompanied by a prayer for pardon and a fourth is never recognized and its children are considered illegitimate.

The Fetha Negast, most intricate of legal, social, medical and religious codes, forbids marriage to lepers, eunuchs, madmen, and sufferers from elephantiasis. Blood relations to the seventh generation may not marry nor may guardian and ward, foster brother and sister, or such spiritual relatives as godfather and godchild or godfather and sister or mother of godchild. The descendants of spiritual connections¹ are forbidden to unite until after the twelfth generation. It also ordains that neither a child's parents nor its godparents may cohabit on the day of its baptism.

If the religious marriage is as rare as it is unpopular in Abyssinia, perhaps because the women remember their primeval freedom and will not ally themselves for a lifetime to any one man, at least the priests are invited to bless the civil marriage (*bercha*) which is the most popular form among families of any position. Some-

¹ After the third generation the *Abouna* can give a dispensation.



Through the Kumm Forest



The person in the photo.

times an engagement is ratified before a priest, in which case the couple exchange rings, with hands joined on the cross. The day on which an engagement is announced must be chosen with the utmost care and, generally, an ancient Abyssinian cabal is consulted. In this the qualities and possibilities of each day of the year are noted, as:

- Jan. 2nd. Don't leave your house. Misfortune may happen.
- Jan. 5th. Keep well your soul and body. This day is dangerous.
- Jan. 6th. Go where you will without fear.
- Jan. 11th. Don't go on a journey. Your enemies will conquer you.
- Jan. 13th. Festival of the angels. Pray and they will assist you.
- Jan. 16th. The best of days. Who is ill will be cured, etc.
- Jan. 17th. Don't walk near water, etc.
- Jan. 21st. Do anything you like.
- Jan. 26th. Eat and drink with your friends. It is a day of friendship.

Few possess complete knowledge of this creed and the priests frown upon it, but any one who can repeat the whole cabal, cleric or layman alike, is ensured of a competence and eager to increase it!

The engagement is considered binding when it has been explicitly announced by the father or guardian of the bride in presence of the bridegroom's parents and guarantors, and confirmed by an oath in the name of the

Negus. On this occasion the bridegroom hands over a sum of money and certain presents for his fiancée such as clothes and ornaments, oil, scent, and incense. From this moment the guarantor becomes the *deus ex machina* of the family to be. He has made himself responsible that the rights of the bride shall be respected, that she shall be suitably fed and housed and not ill-treated. Therefore all conjugal disputes are referred to him and he acts as guide, philosopher, and friend, as well as a sort of insurance for the bridegroom's solvency. If the marriage pact is infringed, the wife's father can force the guarantor to pay three dollars every three days until his son-in-law arranges matters to his satisfaction. The husband must eventually refund to his guarantor double the sum disbursed on account of his misdemeanors.

A banquet signals the ratification of the fiançailles. and on this and similar subsequent occasions the bride's father can claim a number of beasts and sacks of grain from the bridegroom's family, but in return he must make a present of money which is subtracted from the amount of the promised *dot*. Sometimes a dance follows the banquet, but the men and women sit on different sides of the yard and, while dancing, they do not touch each other. At first the man rotates round his partner while she pivots like a top. Then they posture opposite each other with undulations which would be serpentine but for the thickness and multiplicity of their garments. The monotony at last gives way to a restrained violence reminiscent of a war dance.

The civil marriage is announced at a banquet, where men and women eat in different courts. There are more dances and much firing of rifles, while some responsible

person makes a list of all the gifts brought by the guests. After this the bride, so muffled in cloak, *chamma* and muslin veil that nothing of her can be seen, is led into the men's yard and seated on a bench, while her father enumerates the amount of her *dot* in money or beasts and the entire list of household goods he is giving her. He then asks if her father-in-law agrees to accept such a *dot* and upon receiving an affirmative answer, he can, if he wishes, ask for a new guarantor. Unless otherwise previously agreed and indicated before witnesses at this moment of the marriage feast, all the possessions of the young couple are considered to be the common property of both. In case of divorce they are equally divided by three arbiters in the presence of the guarantors and the members of both families. So rigidly is the equality insisted on that carpet stuffs, and even clothing are apt to be cut in two and, if there is but one kettle, it is quite possible that the husband may find himself with the pot and the wife with the lid!

Sometimes after the marriage the husband has to take his wife on a formal visit to her parents that they may see she has not been ill-treated.

A third form of marriage, neither religious nor civil, but conditional, is in use among families who wish to be certain of an heir, without incurring the expenses of repeated weddings. This experimental marriage does not generally last more than two years without being regularized by the civil ceremony (*bercha*), but such ratification takes place with as little display as possible.

The fourth form (*dumoz*) is really a legalized concubinage. It is arranged for an indeterminate period and for fixed terms, and the pact is as solemnly ratified as it

is in the case of *bercha*. The "husband" agrees before witnesses to live in faithfulness and unity with the woman of his choice, to give her food and clothing and to pay her a certain sum annually or monthly. A guarantor makes himself responsible for the fulfillment of such agreement and often a priest blesses the temporary pact, which can be terminated at will without publicity. Sometimes *dumoz* is changed into *bercha* when the lovers are old and united by human or financial interests in the shape of children or the accumulation of the sum due to the temporary wife!

There is still another category of respectable Abyssinian women, the *sabaiti nassen*, concubines of chiefs and important personages, well housed and paid and enjoying as much consideration as the legitimate wives, or the helpmeets of the very poor who have nothing to contribute to a common purse, so live esteemed and honored with their lovers, till a turn of fortune pushes them either into civil marriage or the arms of another. The prostitutes are of a class apart, but they enjoy more consideration in Abyssinia, which throughout the ages has been accustomed to the moral or immoral freedom of her women, than in another land. Often, after they have earned a *dot*, they marry, live honestly, and leave no stain on the escutcheon of their children. Only in the religious and civil marriages is community of property acknowledged.

The causes for a religious divorce have already been quoted. In the case of *bercha*, the reasons may be much more frivolous, a caprice on the part of the woman, the omission of some household duties, her neglect of parents-in-law, the husband's refusal to give his wife a

present, or the birth of a still-born child which brings bad luck to the whole clan. Family policy may change and an alliance in another direction be advisable. A blood feud may arise and, since marriage is not so much the affair of bride and groom, as a pact made between their parents, it is these who arrange the divorce. If husband and wife separate, each, at the time of the divorce, has the right to forbid the remarriage of the other with one given person who must be named before witnesses. If the man wants the divorce, he merely sends his wife back to her father's house and asks the latter to fix a day for the division of goods. If it is the woman or her family, she returns on some pretext to her father, who obliges the husband's guarantor to pay a daily forfeit until his son-in-law fixes the day for the breaking up of the household, which must be done in the presence of at least three arbiters. Very often, while this is pending, the wife returns to cook for her husband and generally look after his comfort! If a woman divorced for no grave fault, or a widow, does not wish to remarry, she has the right of maintenance from her ex-husband or his family, as represented by a certain amount of land which she can cultivate.

The Fetha Negast ordains that a man must have attained the age of twenty, a girl of twelve before they can marry, but this only applies to the religious ceremony, which is so little used that even the Empress, four times wedded, with at least two ex-husbands living, had recourse to the church only on the last occasion, when she espoused Ras Gooksa. There is no age limit for the civil marriage, but children are seldom wedded until they are seven. Such an affair is merely a friendly

agreement among the parents, between whose huts the wife divides her time, so that she may learn to know her groom without forgetting her own family. At twelve she goes to live with her husband who, if he is a minor, still shares the parental roof. His father administers the *dot* until the young couple have a house of their own.

As long as the two children thus married are of the same age, the custom has its advantages for, brought up side by side, they have every chance of caring for each other and no reason for contracting the precocious irregular unions facilitated by a life careless, unguarded, and day-long in fields and woods. Often, however, middle-aged men take a child to wife, or boys marry women twice or three times their age. There are girls of twelve to fifteen who, because of their parents' quarrels and ambitions, have been legitimately married several times. They may even have given their children, generally diseased or still-born, to a succession of such bridegrooms. Their constitutions are never robust, for the altitude and insufficient nutriment tend to weaken the mountain stock. They are broken by this premature childbirth, yet, to support the babies who live, they must exhaust what strength remains to them by labor on farm or in forest. The birth-rate is not high in Abyssinia, probably because of the physical toil to which the women are devoted. A family of more than three or four is rare, infant mortality is very high, and terrible inherited diseases are common.

Circumcision is performed on the boys and clitoridectomy on the girls, possibly to curb an excessive sexual sensibility unsuited to the hard life of the peasants. At one time the Coptic church forbade the latter operation,

but, owing to a certain malformation of Abyssinian women, which caused the men to look beyond their borders for wives, the ban was removed. In some places the former ceremony, though carried out in a primitive and rather barbarous way by the members of a local family who are supposed to be hereditary specialists, is the occasion for a feast to which friends and priests are invited. After this the child is left to nature, unless its screams suggest the necessity of an emetic mixed with red pepper! Its first teeth are sometimes pulled out to strengthen the second crop, and its education begins at the cabalistic age of four years and four days. It does not amount to much, for the average Abyssinian knows only the family genealogy and portions of the sacred books. He uses a paid scribe for the writing he despises and employs a seal with his name cut on it, or a thumb mark, by way of signature. A youth's arrival at the age of puberty and his consequent acquisition of civic rights is announced by a feast at which he is supported by four companions a little older than himself, who protect him from the evil eye and generally minister to his needs. After this he wears his *chamma* as a man, not cloakwise opening at the side, and, if the family wealth is sufficient, he buys a peaked cape of stuff or silk according to his station.

In old Abyssinia the sumptuary laws were very strict and none but the great might carry an umbrella. Now the little grass parasols, pagoda shaped, or flat like the Japanese, can be bought for half a dollar in the market towns, so they are flaunted alike by peasant and citizen, but the European form is still more or less reserved for noble or priest, especially in the north. Red is the color

of the Negus and once the red striped *chamma* was forbidden to the plebeian. Like the umbrella, this has been ceded, but only princesses may wear trousers of scarlet and only the Emperor or the archpriests carry a gold fringed parasol of the royal hue.

Great ladies are distinguished by the embroidery at neck and wrists of their "shirts," longer than those of the men and tighter sleeved, by their gold ornaments, by their black silk capes edged and fringed with gold, and by the thickly embroidered trousers which, when traveling, just peep out from under the all-enveloping black woolen capes, surmounted by various white muffings and a felt hat. Silk and embroidery are forbidden to the plebeian, however rich he may be, as are certain forms of harness, saddle cloths and equipment, so there is a general desire to be able to boast connection, however distant, with a great family.

Genealogies are considered of the greatest importance, not only as a matter of personal pride, but as proof of land tenure, of relationship, of blood feuds, of the possibility of hereditary illness. They are essential in the case of an engagement, because of the ban on marriages between the most distant relations, whether by blood or some spiritual connection. The law, of course, pays no heed to these religious rules, but they are rarely broken, for the culprits would immediately be excommunicated. The material consequences of such condemnation would be as serious as the disgrace, for the couple would be excluded from the village commonwealth and none of the faithful would maintain any relations with them, either personal or commercial.

To be deserted by its own special father-confessor,

who must always be shared by husband and wife, would be a disaster for any household, for he is inextricably involved in its hopes, fears, and superstitions, its quarrels and reconciliations, its prosperity and adversity.

If husband and wife discover some distant and hitherto unknown relationship between them, even after years of marriage, their union is dissolved, but it does not affect the children, who, legitimate or illegitimate, have the same rights. Born of slave or princess, they are equally entitled to inherit, except in Tigre where the priests have most power and consequently a certain precedence is given to the children of religious wedlock.

Domestic slavery in Abyssinia is of course different to the general conception of the word. In earlier days, Ethiopian law recognized the buying of slaves from pagan neighbors or their capture in war, but any Abyssinian who thus acquired a servant was obliged to have him or her religiously educated and within forty days baptized. Once a Christian, the slave could not legally be sold. Theoretically he or she became one of the family, too valuable a possession to ill-treat, but, in fact, the old law winked at slave traffic and slave markets. Menelik started its reform and to-day the difficulty of obtaining new slaves, even by the most secret and expensive ways, is so great that the Northern chiefs have started breeding them in their own houses from slave parents!

Every slave has the right of appeal in court and proof of ill-usage gives instant freedom. It has long been customary for a man to give dowries to his bondwomen or to slave girls he has freed, but the former can only be married with the consent of their lord and generally

only to henchmen of the same household, since the children of such a union are the property of the master and part of the inheritance left to his heirs. It has been a common occurrence for a landowner or merchant to free his favorite slaves, men or women, at his death, and to leave them certain property, beasts, money, or goods, but never land, which is sacred to the family. On account of this custom, few slaves would welcome their immediate freedom, for, without money, fields, or merchandise, with a surfeit of hired manual labor in the towns and the communal system in the country, no existence would be possible for them.

Ras Tafari's edict ordering that all slaves should be freed at the death of their masters, has added to the problems of the police in Addis Ababa, for, yearly, it turns loose a number of ignorant people without provision, who find the career of thief the only one open to them.

How far the arrogant Northerners manage to evade compliance with this law is difficult to say, but it is probable that, in most cases, any effort in this direction would be supported by the slaves who, for the most part, have the mentality of a child or a good-natured animal. No difference is made between the slave man and the servant. Their work, food and clothes are the same and, in humble households, all three are identical with those of the master.

The lot of the woman slave is complicated by the question of concubinage. If a bondwoman bears a child to her lord, automatically she is free and, on the death of the master of the house, custom has always permitted his concubines to claim their freedom should they desire

it. It was also habitual for a slave girl who had lived with her owner to acquire the privileges of a daughter. She could neither be sold, given away, nor married (if a major), without her consent and she was entitled to maintenance both from her master and his heirs.

By Islamic law the rights of slaves are as rigorously protected as those of women and children, but in Ethiopia the family is patriarchal enough for the head of it to be able to dispossess any child he chooses, though he cannot alienate the land from all his stock. Should he die intestate, by traditional law which runs in Shoa, the slave-born children inherit equally with the free but three reliable witnesses are required to guarantee the paternity of the first.

There is no effective illegitimacy in Abyssinia, because the traditional law not only thus honors the guaranteed word of a slave, but accepts unconditionally the declaration of any free woman, wife, concubine, or prostitute. By her simple oath she can attribute the paternity of her children to any man and he is obliged to support them, but if she has once committed perjury, her word is valueless.

Even children of a slave man and woman have the right to maintenance at the expense of their parents' master, but they can neither own nor bequeath any form of property. According to his station in life, master, husband or father is legally responsible for the support of the household and, even in the most irregular and temporary union, he must supply mother and child with food, until the latter is three years old. The amount of food due to wife or mistress is fixed by tradition and, in the case of a chief's lady, each portion is doubled! The

woman also has the right to demand from husband or lover at child-birth and the baptism of her offspring, certain presents such as scent, oil, and stuffs, and certain foods such as fats, spices, and spirits.

In case of divorce the children of a legitimate marriage, either religious or civil, are, like other household possessions, divided between husband and wife. Each is responsible for the support of his or her section of the family. If there are an uneven number, the odd child is given to the mother, but the father has to supply its nourishment for alternate months. When it is time for the daughters to marry both contribute according to their means to the *dot*.

There remains the question of inheritance. In this the woman's rights are limited, if she be maid, to maintenance and a sufficient *dot* to secure her a husband, unless she is the sole representative of the family. Sometimes, however, the heirs prefer to divide the paternal live stock and goods with their unmarried sisters rather than assume the eventual heavier responsibilities of the *dot*. This never applies to land or houses which are the unalienable property of the male. The land may be granted by the crown (to whom theoretically it all belongs) to great chiefs in perpetuity, to governors, officers and courtiers, even to great ladies, for long or short periods, but, under the changing feudal lords, the peasant remains secure in his tenure, so long as he pays the three taxes, a levy on grain and live-stock, a proportion of his weekly labor, and a share of "dergo", the public hospitality. The earth he cultivates is his sole means of support and of those of his race who follow him. He realizes, therefore, that he has

but a life interest in it, and that he must pass it on intact. To grant right of inheritance to a woman would be to alienate the essential possession of the stock, to jeopardize the existence of future generations. According to tradition the land must always be ready to supply the needs of the whole family. Temporarily it is ruled or administered by the head, but fundamentally it is the possession of the race. From it they wrench the hard living and spare nutriment which, added to the insensate length and number of fasts, the dirt, extreme of climate, and hereditary diseases, reduced their physical and muscular development.

This communality of family land insures a means of existence to all males who are willing to work, for the country is sparsely populated for its size, land is abundant, and each stock has its own recognized area. Unfortunately it limits production, because each household is a self-supporting, self-sufficient unit, working just hard enough to cope with its own needs. It does not produce anything extra unless perhaps a little grain to barter at a distant market, and it does nothing to improve the land, since it will not be able to take advantage of the fruits of such extra labor. The Abyssinian is improvident by nature and, if the wood on his land were not as much family property as the earth itself, he would cut down every tree and leave his heirs without the possibility of constructing a hut or making a fire.

There are districts where the only possible fuel is dung and, in such places, it is the women's duty to collect it, dry it in the sun, pound and mould it into flat cakes, and always keep one small fire alight. In one village we passed there was a communal fire, which each woman

in turn had to serve for a certain number of hours, that light and heat might always be at the service of a community which possessed neither matches nor sun glass.

If the woman has no right of inheritance in the family land, she is as maid, or wife, living in the house of father or husband, entitled to a small portion which she can cultivate herself to supply her hairdressing money! The young girl only plaits the edges of her hair, winding these tresses round her temples and leaving the crown fuzzy. With every year the garland of plaits grows wider until there is only a small circle of fluff in the centre, which disappears at the consummation of marriage or her majority.

The grown woman strains her hair into innumerable fine ridges running from forehead to nape and, the more skillful the dresser, the more tortured appears the skin between them. According to whether the harvest is good or bad, to whether she has worked hard in her allotment or not, the peasant can afford one or two such coiffures a month. It takes the whole day, from dawn to sunset, to achieve a masterpiece of the most fashionable kind, in which the plaits are so thin that they look like fine cord netted across the head and the scalp is left so sore that the lightest touch is painful till growth relieves the tension on each hair. The artist who performs this miracle with woolly fuzziness, generally in an extreme state of dirt, is paid a dollar for each dressing, and the object of her ministration is obliged to sleep on a wooden neck-rest until she can bear the contact of a hard leather pillow on her taunt stretched skin. The size of the plaits varies according to the taste or wealth of the wearer, but it is always the field which supplies

the means to produce them. Sometimes this particular piece of "combing land" may be bequeathed from mother to daughter, and it is by the gift of such a perpetual means of hairdressing that chieftains reward their favorites!

The Abyssinian woman in times of deep mourning is supposed to tear out her web of fine tresses by the roots, but I think nowadays, though one occasionally sees a bleeding head among the most frantic mourners, knife, glass or a razor completes the work begun by hand. Dirty clothes are also a sign of mourning, and a bereaved wife or mother will follow the bier, beating herself so hard with a cord that blood drip from her breasts or temples.

It is generally conceded in Ethiopia that a woman's first judge is her husband, so nobody can proceed against her judicially without having previously consulted her spouse, who has the choice of publicly supporting her in court by which he assumes full financial responsibility, or, should he deem her guilty, of paying for her delinquencies. These are nearly always vocal, and consist of perjury, libel, false accusation, or slander. It is very rare that a woman commits any graver offence, since the blood feuds which justify all forms of murder, are carried out by the men, and crimes of passion hardly exist in a country where so much license is permitted. She may, of course, run into debt, or steal, but there is no state prosecution in Abyssinia, so the husband can stifle publicity if he chooses, with those all-powerful Maria Theresa dollars. A woman is punished for infidelity by divorce with the loss of her *dot*, a man more often by a fine, for whose payment the guarantor is re-

sponsible. If a husband beat his wife, the guarantor has to pay, and here there is direct conflict between two admitted rights, for a man is allowed to punish his wife, and the woman to claim damages. Consequently, in an ill-tempered household, the man continues to beat, and the woman to pile up a fortune!

Crimes of violence committed on a woman are punished by fines based on the price of blood. If this is, say 120 dollars, sixty would be levied for an offence against an unmarried girl, forty for the same offence against a married woman, less in the case of a widow, and perhaps only a twentieth part of the price of blood if the victim were a courtesan. To prove such offence only the oath of the woman is necessary.

In Abyssinia only rebels and habitual thieves are punished by mutilation, flogging or imprisonment. All other crimes are settled on the basis that a man's life is worth so much, his honor so much less, and everything he possesses can be replaced for a varying sum. In fact price has superseded value. The guarantor takes the place of correctional justice and, in his vigilance, he is assisted by all his family who consider that they share his responsibility. Nothing is private in a life which entails so much community of interests that everyone is his neighbor's policeman. If blood money is not accepted, murder is more often punished by vendetta than by public justice, and the death of a woman imposes the same duty on her relations as that of a man, but it is her father and brothers who must revenge her, not her husband, and it is to them that blood money must be paid. It is the race which claims payment for its blood, not the husband for a home destroyer.

Undoubtedly the women of Ethiopia enjoy a greater measure of respect than is granted to their neighbors. Their word is honored as in no other country in the world, since it is accepted without witness or guarantee. The same deference is extended to their persons, for if, in a discussion or quarrel, a man seizes a married woman's arm, even if he rests a hand on her shoulder, she can claim his punishment. It is sufficient for a stranger to touch a woman against her will, or to make any illicit suggestion to her, to menace her with the mildest form of violence, for her to claim a pecuniary recompense. In all such cases judgment is granted on the unsupported testimony of the woman.

In Abyssinia the peasant woman takes no part in public life, but the great lady can administer lands granted her for life tenure by her husband or the Negus. She administers justice, receives and pays taxes, dispenses hospitality, apportions the farms and, in case of war, while assigning the actual command of her troops to the officers of her choice, she is quite capable of directing operations from the vicinity of the battlefield. Greetings or letters from any man, whatever his station, to such a woman would be full of exaggerated compliments, in which scriptural passages would be cited in praise of her beauty and virtue, even if both were obviously defective. Compliments are essential to conversation between the sexes of whatever position, providing they are not married, but deference depends on position. The peasant woman may have her civil and family rights, but, overworked and undernourished, nature is harder on her than man and, before she is forty, she is too exhausted physically, mentally, and often morally,

to claim them. The lady with no other labor than the bearing of two or three children and the supervision of many slaves, secluded, sedentary, with few calls on mind or body, expects and is granted consideration. Both are amazingly free as far as the disposal of their persons is concerned, but the labor of the one, the property of the other, belongs to the husband. Money is the alpha and omega of Abyssinia, and through the traditional law of inheritance, in its only definite, enduring form,—land—it is in the hands of the men.

CHAPTER VII.

A DANKALI PANIC AMONG THE GUIDES.

FROM Habro the grassland rolls gradually downwards, though here and there parapets and turrets of rock break its rounded lines. We started early while the downs were heaps of rose petals, cupped in mist. The mimosas were a fluff of yellow, and marsh-mallows, purple and orange, grew beside the water-holes. Huge, red-winged locusts spun through the grass forest on either side of the path, and birds flashed over it with the sheen of jeweled metal. Occasionally we passed gorgu trees with grey gnarled bark and a mass of flame-colored flowers unfurled like parasols, or the colossal warka, which covers half an acre with its wide-spread branches. The muleteers clambered into these to pick the fruit, dull green like the leaves, and rather like an unripe fig, full of black seeds.

After a four hours' march we camped near Galamso village in order that our followers might buy sufficient provisions in the local market to last them through the five or six days' journey to Ankober.

Galamso is the terminus of the main track into Arussi, whose hills rose high to the south of us, and, among the white-clad Christians who bartered live stock, doura, and bananas under the shelter of straw booths, scarcely bigger than a Gainsborough hat, were Gallas of both sexes clad in skins. These recently subjugated pagans rep-

resent the primitive Africa out of which modern Abyssinia has evolved, but to me they never seemed a part of the essential Ethiopia. Some of them are wealthy, owning large flocks and herds, and others so poor that they will eat refuse, disputing it with the wild dogs who haunt the dung heaps. The smell of them is distinctive, and partly due to the fat with which they anoint themselves, or the uncured hides they wrap around them. The women cover arms, necks and ankles with massive ornaments of bone or brass, but their appearance is almost as unkempt as the men's. Girl babies are not popular, for marrying a daughter is expensive, so they are often put out on the hillside to make a meal for hyenas.

In some places both sexes eat the flesh of hippopotamus, and are despised as unclean feeders by the rest of their people. They are superstitious, believing in totems and tabus, and they worship a spirit called Wakwe, and a host of minor ones called Sarooh. Their tombs, surrounded by a painted stone wall, are guarded by an erection of brushwood hung with strips of cloth and leather, which is supposed to keep away evil spirits. In more violent days the number of rags denoted the total of enemies slain, but now they represent the dead man's bag of lion and elephant. The Southern Gallas are spearmen, eating snakes and wild honey on the march, believing in omens which will help or hinder their hunting, and like all wild peoples, they are shy and resentful of strangers, though such resentment is generally defensive rather than offensive.

All this is Africa, but not the basic Abyssinia, Christian while Europe was still worshipping the Norse gods or idols, unconquered during the 3,000 years of her

known existence, though rent by unending civil war. Gibbon writes of her sixth century attack on Mecca: "If a Christian power had been maintained in Arabia, Mahomet must have been crushed in his cradle and Abyssinia must have prevented a revolution which changed the civil and religious state of the world."

In those days an embassy from the Emperor Justinian visited the court of Ethiopia and so, throughout the ages, the Negus has dealt on equal terms with Europe. In turn, Portugal, France, England and Italy have treated for the friendship of the Shoa kings and, with the exception of Lord Napier's expedition to free the British prisoners at Magdala, the only time that Abyssinia has come into direct conflict with a European power, resulted in a native victory at Adua, where the Italians, outnumbered and badly advised, were defeated by the late Menelik. Thus, though Abyssinia maintains century-old customs and superstitions, though the modern seems so lightly imposed on the incredibly ancient, though the feudal system, the Law of Moses, Biblical instruments and industries, mediæval savagery exist beside the railway and the telephone, the essence of the land to me is not raw, native Africa, but the romance of an age-old history. So it was always the North that attracted me and, with each day's march towards Addis Ababa, I thought of what lay beyond in the little known provinces that were once a keystone of the world's two greatest faiths.

The land which sent a queen to Solomon, conquered Arabia, traded with the India of the Moguls, sheltered the persecuted followers of the Prophet, chose the chivalrous Cristoforo da Gama as ally in its long struggle

for Christianity against Islam, defeated Italy, and still holds the balance between the rival claims of France and England, is surely more truly represented by the monoliths of Axum, the fortress palaces of Gondar, and the unique rock churches of Lalibela, than by the ritual and omen, custom and superstition which are the work of Africa.

When we came back to our camp, laden with live spoils from Galamso market, we found Gabra Gorgis cleaning a chicken. Behind him crouched an earth-stained figure eating with apparent relish the raw fragments our cook discarded.

"He is not an Abyssinian," explained Gouta, seeing my expression. "He is only a Galla."

Galamso provided us richly with chickens, eggs and onions for our onward journey, but especially I remember the onions, for they arrived in basketfuls, the scent of them pervaded the camp for days, and Gabra Gorgis, crooning with joy, introduced them into everything we ate or drank—even apparently the coffee.

The hardest march came after leaving the edge of Arussi, and it was unexpected, for we imagined we should work our way round the cliff of Lagardin. Instead, after following for some miles the dry bed of its stream amidst a thicket of scrub and euphorbias, we mounted suddenly into the colorless world—grey flints under our feet, grey-barked trunks around us and above, such a curtain of white thorn, bulbous, and with three inches of spike, that it looked as if there had been a hoar frost. The ascent was precipitous, and the track hardly more than a goat path. The mules staggered and fell, their sore backs, quarters and hocks a pitful sight,

but it was impossible to stop, for there is no water between the first bend of Lagardin creek and Hawash, two hours away in the blistering heat of the plain. Before we reached the top of the ridge, the thorns had closed round us like an army of bayonets, and we left not only shreds of clothing, but a certain amount of skin along the way. Even the leather knee pads of my breeches were torn, and Jones' stout whipcord suffered several rents, while for days afterwards we were treating raw knuckles and scratches which swelled to surprising proportions. At last, after many disillusions, the summit was crossed, and we began to pick our way down towards the valley. Apparently the ancient gods had used Lagardin as a battlefield and rained their thunderbolts upon it, for the earth was strewn with rocks, as thick as hail after a storm. The blazing sun was reflected back from them, and a thick red dust smothered us. Hour after hour we staggered downwards, with red eyes and parched throats, feeling that if we smiled or spoke our lips would split. Even my white mule that "ran like water", stumbled at every step.

We met no one during the whole day's march, except a Galla woman, naked but for a leather collar and a loin cloth, leading a camel. There were neither huts nor herdsmen on Lagardin, and the *ballambarassi* kept a watchful eye on the caravan.

"No one lives here but robbers," he said, "bad people who shoot first and use their knives afterwards." He made explicit and horrid gestures, and thereafter we marched with rifles ready and, whenever a mule strayed or a man lagged behind, the whole party halted.

Jones, unaware of such stringent measures, stopped

to mend his sun-glasses, saw a hawk hovering within tempting range, and fired to test his new revolver. The result was something like an earthquake, and my first realization of it was being pushed violently into the nearest cover, which was thorny. The *ballam-barassi* stacked protesting mules round me before I could make myself heard. The soldiers closed in, crouched down with rifles ready; the muleteers seized the nearest weapon, and even the slave-boy took the cooking-pot off his head, prepared to wield it by the handle. There was a moment's tense excitement and comparative silence. Then into the midst of all this war-like preparation walked Jones smiling, his spectacles and some feathers in one hand, a revolver in the other! Explanations were complicated, since they were conducted by Jones in English, by Omar in French, by Gabra Gorgis in the Italian of which he was so proud, by myself and the soldiers in Arabic, and by the rest of the party simultaneously in Amharic!

We camped, waterless, at Ardaga, presumably the name of a district, since there was nothing within sight but stones and thorns. Jones shaved in two inches of potato water in a cup, while I made use of paraffin as a dry-cleaner. Afterwards the soldiers scattered and, mysteriously in the morning, there was coffee and a little milk.

"How did this happen?" I asked Gutta.

"There are sometimes people who have gourds or goats," he replied with his sleepy-cat expression, but he did not add how the "people" had been relieved of such possessions.

It was steamy hot, with mist on the horizon, as we

continued our way through the terrible thorns, always downwards, till the Gara of Gumbo, an abrupt sugar loaf rock, with a couple of curious shaped cliffs adjoining, lay behind us, and in front, the dusty white of the plain. Among the last mimosas, scarlet lilies with pinkish cactus leaves stood up like a forest of red hot poker. Hares loped away from us, and we passed camel herds in charge of savages "dressed only in lances and knives" as Omar politely expressed it. The women were round breasted and well built, a leather kilt hung to their knees, and their hair was twisted into a quantity of tight ringlets after the fashion of ancient Egypt. I tried to photograph two girls, their shapely backs burdened with skins full of water. Whether they thought the kodak was a manifestation of devildom, or a new form of firearm, I don't know, but they sprang away, uttering shrill, far-carrying calls that were obviously the battle-cry of their people. Omar hustled me into the saddle.

"They are wild creatures," he said, "and there will be trouble, for they have warned their men. We must ride quickly or spears will be thrown at us."

It was impossible to ride quickly for the caravan constantly got entangled with creepers, which took toll of flesh and clothing, and with strayed camel foals, curly-haired and altogether too long of leg, but some hours after leaving Ardaga, we climbed down into the wide gorge of Hawash. The fording of the river delayed us, for the mules all tried to lie down, and the water runs strongly over round slippery boulders. Everybody got very wet and cross. I thought my throat would split before I could make myself heard, when Gutta, the

precious camera slung over his shoulder, nearly had a fight in mid-stream with Desta, who carried the tripod, over which had left a stick on the further bank. At last I waded in to my knees and dragged the nearest warrior to shore, whither the other was obliged to follow in order to continue the discussion.

The climb out of the gorge was unique. At the moment when the *nagadi* realized that he had chosen the wrong track and that, owing to the colossal boulders among which the caravan was wedged, it could neither go up nor down the precipice, a herd of oxen with incredibly long horns, barged somehow over the top. It was a horrible moment, for it looked as if riders and mules alike must be impaled on the monstrous points swinging downwards. We all flung ourselves off the track in different and most perilous directions, the majority of the luggage was upset, various people were kicked and crushed, but, by some miracle of ingenuity on the part of the mules, by an apparently collapsible quality or power of contraction in the cattle, the mob of beasts disentangled themselves and no one was killed. When I looked back from the top, breathless and bleeding, and saw the place up which I had climbed in riding boots, I wondered what special Providence was concerned with our fate. Omar, turbanless, so that he looked like a skinned rabbit, breathed heavily beside me.

"Allah looks after the mad!" he said between gasps.

Hawash is on the only railway line of Abyssinia, and its agreeable little inn shelters such passengers as patronize the biweekly express. These "mails" do the journey in leisurely fashion, spending two nights on the

way, during which either Dire Dawa or Hawash is busy providing beds for travellers, but when we arrived at the cluster of tin-roofed sheds and mud hovels that represent mosquito-haunted Hawash, it was an off day and the inn was locked up. It was two o'clock, we had baked and blistered in the desert since our dawn coffee, and even the blackest soldier confessed to exhaustion after our adventure and the consequent reloading in the gorge. So, when the wide verandah and the pepper trees within the barbed wire fence refused us shelter, there was general dismay.

"There is no shade for the camp," said Omar dolefully.

"No fodder for the mules," and "no wood for my fire," echoed from the *nagadi* and Gabra Gorgis. I gave one glance round the sun-blackened, dust-caked faces, hoisted myself on the wall, clambered over the barbed wire—insignificant after the thorns of Lagardin—dropped into the coolness denied us. Methodically, without missing a single door or window, I beat such a tattoo round the place that eventually a delighted Greek was roused from his slumbers—they must have been deep!—and bade us a warmer welcome than I felt we merited after such an attack.

The first comprehensive wash for ten days was scarcely completed when we found it necessary to look—actively—for a guide. Omar's knowledge of the country stopped short at Hawash, and though the *bal-lambarassi* assured us he was raking the market for a native who knew the track to Ankober, his efforts so far had been unsuccessful. The afternoon brought nothing but unsatisfactory reports. The mules were

tired, the soldiers footsore, no guide of any sort was to be had, and nobody dared venture into the "waterless desert" without one. I laughed at the adjective, because the sands of Hawash only stretch some eighteen miles south of the river and perhaps twenty-five north on the way to the hills. There was certainly water at Tadecha Melkea, ten hours' march to the northwest, though it is not a town as marked on the maps, but a district round a river bed. At last I realized there was something mysterious about all these objections, so, sallying forth with Omar, I interrogated every individual we met, till we secured a choice of two guides. One was a most beautiful and affected person with an Odol smile and a Gainsborough felt hat, the other a hard-bitten Somali, whose dialect only our *khbral* understood. Both demanded two months' pay for the three or four days' journey to Ankober, and neither would return alone, but insisted that they must go on with us to Addis Ababa. Omar was obliged to explain.

"It's the Dankalis," he said, "they are savages, and there is no traffic through their country."

The beautiful one added, with a coy twist of his shoulders: "They have a feud with Abyssinians and Somalis, and they kill all they can get hold of."

The mysterious delay was explained, also the dejected expression of Gabra Selessi, when I confronted him with my choice of guides. The *balambarassi* looked gentler and more wan than usual, as he sat flicking away flies with a whisk, and questioning my recruits as to their knowledge of water and alternate tracks. I heard afterwards that he had confided to the inn-keeper: "I have been ordered to accompany the lady to Addis Aba-

ba, so wherever she goes, I shall go too,—what does it matter if I die!—but I cannot condemn my soldiers, so I shall send them by train to the capital,” a curious interpretation of the functions of an army!

There was an hour's talk, in which everyone joined, from the Yemen porter, the cook in a check petticoat and a pink turban, and the Arab station-master in a scarlet and yellow variation of the same, to the Greek landlord, a few railway men, the Government telephonist, and all our escort. After this, it was decided that the Somali should guide us swiftly, by unfrequented tracks, avoiding Tadecha Melkea where the Dankalis lurked by the river, that we should reduce our luggage to six mule loads, sending most of the film cases to Addis Ababa by rail in order that we should be the more mobile in case of attack, and that we should add to our riflemen, the chief of the local police and half a dozen of his soldiers.

“We shall soon have a regiment with us,” I said to Omar, thinking of the water to be carried for these hill people who, magnificent on their mountains, go to pieces in the desert, and cannot do a few hours' march without drinking.

The *ballambarassi* must have overheard. With his sudden smile, not devoid of raillery, he said: “When I was young, I, too, was without fear.”

“You have experience,” I suggested, bowing.

The Dankalis are a nomadic people, wandering in search of grass for their camel herds, within bounds on which Somalis and Gallas have alternately encroached. Since they took part in that 16th century Moslem invasion, which threatened to subjugate Ethiopia, they

have been at enmity with the race which rules without having conquered them, and to which they still refuse tribute. Of Arab grafted on to Hamitic stock, their characteristics are as conflicting as the legends of their origin. Warm-hearted, yet childishly cruel, brave but treacherous in anger, though it is said of them that they never attack in the dark, quickly enraged, quickly appeased, they appear to be as changeable as the sites of their temporary villages.

We left Hawash for the country of these "savages" after one p. m. next day and, with a maximum of heat, dust and discomfort, we accomplished the sixty miles to Aliu Amba in forty-eight hours. The first afternoon our way lay across the flat desert of Hawash, relieved only by thorns and a quantity of game. We saw gazelle, oryx, and a dyk-dyk, which we took for a hare, till his tiny horns appeared. Enormous black birds, with white tips to their wings, flapped in front of us like monstrous, but rather short-legged cranes, and pinkish-fawn vultures, which the soldiers called marabout, stared at us with solemn, unwinking eyes. We marched fast, breaking into a trot whenever the Somali shrieked at us, so that half an hour after sunset when we arrived at the plantations of Ouara Melkea—dom-palm, banana and limes—we calculated we must have done at least nine miles. Camp was pitched under a tree, tents, mules and fires within a circle whose diameter could not have been more than thirty feet. Round this sentries were posted and all night long they chattered to the friendly Dan-kalis who, with their chief, Danan, brought us gallons of milk in gourds cased in colored straw and hung with cowrie shells.

Next morning the muleteers pulled down our tents almost before we were out of them, and we learned that the Somali, suffering from an attack of cold feet, had refused to come any further. A mule had disappeared, and the *ballambarassi* was terrified lest the three fully-armed soldiers who had run after it, would never return. At this juncture, Danan came to our rescue. When we had first seen him by firelight, he had several toothpicks stuck in his wild hair, a loin-cloth, holes in his ears the size of saucers, strung round his neck a quantity of leather amulet cases as large as envelopes, each containing a written charm or some specially blessed earth and leaves. The morning showed a transformation, for the Dankali headman appeared in the white of Abyssinia, with brass ornaments wherever bracelet, anklet or necklace could be worn. He was accompanied by less fashionable followers, armed with rifles, but otherwise content with nature and two strips of tallow-soaked cotton, one for kilt, the other for shawl. They had the weirdest and most wizened faces, as if their skins had been accordion-pleated and then pasted over the bones. Their eyes were a murky brown and red, showing no white at all. These people kissed my hands with the gentle grace of Italy, and one, whose name was Lifa, assured us he would guide us to the end of the world, by which he meant the mountains.

Then began one of those nightmare marches on which everything goes wrong for no particular reason. Some nine miles from Ouara Melkea we crossed the Kabana, whose several streams ran through a wide, deep bed full of stones. These boulders were of polished, slippery roundness, and Demessi, carrying the cinema apparatus,

pitched, mule and all, down the worst of them. Jones just managed to save the camera from the river, but the mule's back was so torn that it had to be added to our list of casualties.

Ever since we had left Lagardin for the sharp descent into Ardaga, the heat had been stifling. The black dust stank as the mules shovelled it into clouds, and, all more or less suffering from fever, we slouched lax in our saddles and could hardly bear to walk.

There was a terrific battle—of words—among the stones of Kabana. The *nagadi* screamed that his beasts would die if driven further in this heat. The Dankalis shrilled that it was a full day's march to the next water and we must hurry. One mule upset its load for the ninth time, kicked till tent and bedding rolled underneath, then collapsed on top of it. Tempers were short by the time animal and baggage were disentangled, and argument waxed hot as we straggled up the gorge. For an hour or two I rode with my eyes shut, clinging numbly to the pommel, my mouth stiff with dust and thirst, for I would not drink on the march as an example to the escort who wanted to stop each moment for refreshment. I think it was the unnatural silence which finally roused me. I looked round to meet the *ballambarassi's* distress.

"The *nagadi* has gone," he said.

"Gone! Where?"

"Gone!" repeated everyone, and "Allah alone knows," added Omar.

Among the plethora of tracks which wound over grassy uplands, separated by deep, dry gorges, the baggage and Lifa had chosen one, Danan, a dozen soldiers



The meat market at Hesse

and ourselves another. The question remained, how soon should we meet? I had a pint of water in my bottle, and a box of malted milk tablets, nobody else had anything except memories of hurried coffee at six a. m. A torrid wind straight out of the African oven, burned our eyes and pricked our skin into spots.

"Water exists at Argobba," said Danan, "and the *nagadi* will stop beside it," but, when I asked how far away it was he shrugged his shoulders, waved sinuous fingers, and remarked, "We may get there to-day."

I shut my eyes again, and the white mule plodded through grass and stones, shaking me into painful consciousness when we stumbled into the dry nullahs. Here baboons barked at us like dogs, and a wretched bird ma-aed so like a goat that it roused hopes of a village. The baboons were hideous and amusing. Whole families of them patrolled the rocks, the fathers stalking ahead and growling, but Providence must have made the birds during a nightmare, for all of them were out of proportion, with unwieldy knobbed heads or swollen beaks, and the noises they made would have defeated a jazz band.

"Oh, lord," said Jones, during the hottest hour of the afternoon, "I wish they'd boiled these mules to make them soft."

We passed monstrous ant-hills that we hoped were camels browsing, and deserted Dankali huts like clusters of round mud pies, so small that even a child must have had difficulty in standing upright in them. As we mounted towards the hills, there were traces of forts, with stone-walled compounds, and at last, when the Abyssinians were white under their black, and so

seamed with sweat and dust that their faces looked like nets, we saw some Dankalis working at a brushwood fence. By this time we had shared the milk tablets and given the soldiers the water as the sole alternative to leaving them on the road, so Omar and I dashed into the stubble to try and purchase anything liquid, and if possible to get news of the baggage. I had a glimpse of wild-haired spearmen and of some attractive women, slim and pale tea-colored, fillets of leather bound round their heads, but that was all. With high-pitched gurgling they bolted, easily beating our mules. Dejected, we returned and shuffled along in single file, aching in half a dozen places and numb between the shoulder-blades.

At sunset, after 23 miles, we came to Argobba, a series of three villages, each pitched on a separate hill. At the first we found one of our mules, which was so nearly dead that the *nagadi* had sold it for 3 dollars? At the second, two of the muleteers were discovered with a gourd, which the soldiers promptly tore from them, and at the third, where there was a deep, black water-hole, we found a proud *nagadi*, who vouchsafed, "Good walk, ah?"

A breath of mountain coolness came into our tents that night, but we were still tired when, with promises of "Aliu Amba in four hours," he set off to climb the first ridge that lay between us and the cloud-capped range of Ankober. That ridge repeated itself again and again, till I thought the mules could not crawl up another one. Cotton frothed white on the sheltered slopes, for we had left the Dankali country and Moslem villages were perched on each bastion of the mountain. Corner after perilous corner revealed another cascade

of rocks aeroplaning towards some peak, or falling into an abyss or shaggy scrub. The boulders of which these titanic chutes consist are two or three feet high, worn smooth and slippery, and between them are ruts of a few inches width. The mules hurl themselves down step by step, on rigid forelegs, so that the rider is continually thrown violently on to the spiked pommel. Should his mount slip into a groove, both heels are crashed on to the rocks with a jar that extends to the spine. Sometimes a knee or thigh is flayed as the beast squeezes through a cleft. Often the mule loses its balance, slides backwards and deposits saddle and rider in a heap of flint. After five shattering hours of alternating such ascent and descent, my body felt like jelly, my inside was a large ache, spread into all the places it should not be, and I wanted to feel my head to see how much spine was sticking through it.

"Surely Aliu Amba will be beyond the next cliff," encouraged Omar, and after he had said it a dozen times, we came to a dust heap of the Olympians, only each grain of dust was a rock, jagged and monstrous. The mules bore us painfully up it, but only Gallan tried to ride down. The rest of us clambered cautiously with help of hand and knee, and when I reached the bottom both feet were bleeding. Gallan slipped from his mule and was noisily sick.

At one o'clock we reached a cliff with a sugar-loaf hill at the end, crowned by the usual village. From here the whole country opened like the pages of a book. An immense valley spread below us and, beyond, the range of Ankober raised its cloud-capped summits. Aliu Amba, largest of the many villages, dotting wood and field so

far below that they looked like ink-spots on a map, was distinguishable by one or two tin roofs. After a rest, during which even photography failed to comfort us, we dragged ourselves down the last *via dolorosa*, and as each stone bruised my raw feet, I thought of the red-hot bridge over which the true believer must pass to Paradise. The mules sweated and grunted after us. By three-thirty, the last soldier had limped into camp, pitched among the wild flowers and prickly grass beside the first huts of Aliu Amba, and nobody left it till the following morning. Then, bandaged, linimented, boracic powdered, in a cool wind, with clouds scudding over the mountains which rose a sheer 2,000 feet above us, we started zig-zagging upwards. On the top of the precipice the church of Ankober hung between sky and mist, with the ancient capital behind it.

Jones had not slept, in spite of comprehensive doctoring. "If that child goes on crying," he said, as we halted to fill our water-bottles, "I am afraid I shall be obliged to shoot it."

"Why not?" I replied, listening to one of the nightmare birds giving an excellent imitation of a teething baby!

CHAPTER VIII.

ANKOBER AND THE DEATH OF OMAR.

ANKOBER, the old Shoa capital, deserted by Menelik in favor of Addis Alem and subsequently Addis Ababa, is a large village scattered up and over the two prongs of a peak which divides sharply below the summit. It has a population of a few thousand, and is the seat of a provincial Government under Dejezmatch Asafa. The thatched *tukels* climb with delightful irregularity apparently one on top of another, among thickets of flowering shrubs, bananas and slender eucalyptus. One conical mount is crowned by the residence of the Governor, a collection of large huts within a cane paling, the other by the churches of Jesus, Mary and Our Saviour. A fourth church, St. George, stands on a lower ledge surrounded by kosu trees, from whose bunches of hanging red flowers a sort of tisane is made. Ankober is the political prison of those chiefs who have rebelled against the reigning house, so a strict watch is kept on the ridge between the peaks. No one may pass from cone to cone after 5.30 p. m., and if anyone breaks this rule, he is seized by the guard, tied to a post, and left there until morning, by which time he has probably learned the value of time.

No trade comes to Ankober. She stands aloof from the caravan routes, shrouded by her mists and the glamour of her sanctity, for Menelik's grandfather built the

old mud and plaster Church of Jesus, and the halt and the maimed come there to find health. We clambered up to look at the round, thatched building, where Stern says a portrait of Queen Victoria, presented by King Haile Maleket, was long venerated as one of the Virgin Mary. The outer corridor is lined with delightful beams, rugged in some places, carved in others. The walls of the central tabernacle are painted with black-haired angels and saints, among which Johannis, Mene-lik, Theodore and other Ethiopian royalties are depicted, crowned, winged and guarded by soldiers with rifles! A monstrous blue-black devil happily crunches several victims, in spite of the chains which must hamper the assuaging of his appetite. The Church of Mary, with a beautiful deep-toned bell, is the one seen from far below, but it is modern, with painted pillars and an elaborate yellow cross on the roof.

The people of Ankober are an isolated, self-supporting community, dependent on the wood from their hills, the grain and herds from their slopes, and the produce from their gardens. They do their own spinning and weaving. In front of every hut we saw one or two hand looms where men plied wooden shuttles on a primitive frame, the white *chammas* growing under the gaze of their womenfolk, who, with baskets of cotton fluff beside them, wound the froth on to a bobbin and spun it into thread.

We were climbing happily up and down the wind-mill paths, with cameras ready, when the *ballambarassi* brought a message that the Governor would like to see us. So, followed by an interested crowd, we mounted the highest cone, passed through a double fence, and were

met by a guard of honor. The white-robed riflemen presented arms. Retainers with scarlet-barred *chammas*, hurried towards us, and, between a throng of servitors, old and young, we were led through several huts, square and solidly built, with beamed roofs and cane-lined walls, to the main reception room. Here we were greeted by Dejezmach Asafa, a short, square man, slow of speech, but shrewd. We sat on couches covered with carpets, and drank honey and water which was very good, while we exchanged compliments and good wishes, but the revelation of His Excellency's hospitality came later, when we had returned to our camp. I was writing. Jones was mending the iris of his six-inch lens, and Omar was arguing with the *nagadi*, when a procession began to wind down the hill with the effect of a never-ending frieze. It arrived at our tents before we had realized its portent, and, within a few minutes, not only were sheep and goats, eggs, chicken, and *anjera* tethered or piled around us, but a succession of slaves lowered the scarlet-draped baskets from their heads and produced covered dish after dish, still hot.

The Governor had sent us an Abyssinian dinner, enough for a dozen, and complete down to the bitter *tedj*, and honey-sweet *birrz*. Gallan's mouth watered as he arranged all sorts of rich mysteries on the boxes which now served us for table. There were lumps of chicken red with berberi, that dangerous, throat-skinning sauce, a mess of barley and butter, fried chips of meat and potatoes, lamb and vegetables, liver, hard yellow fruit, and a dozen other good things all spiced and sauced till they were unrecognizable, but equally delectable. Jones and I heaped bits of everything pellmell

into soup plates, wrapped ourselves in blankets, for it was as cold as at Kunni, and sat down with the deliberate intention of eating till there was neither will nor room left in us!

It was not until morning that we realized the unfortunate aspect of Asafa's generosity. At seven a. m. the whole camp was drunk, and determined to get drunker. The situation was obvious at a glance, for the Nagadi and his muleteers were riotous inside their tent, which I instantly brought down on their heads by removing the pegs, and the rest were lying round vessels of various sizes, gourds, horns and jars, all containing *tedj*. It was the work of a few seconds to upset all the liquid in sight, though later on we discovered a few cups carefully hidden behind a tree, but it was much more difficult to get the men to work. The muleteers crawled shamefaced from under their heap of canvas, and we confiscated anything liquid they brought with them, but it took two hours to load the mules, and all the baggage fell off within the first 100 yards. Omar, looking like a piece of wet macaroni, had to be held in the saddle by Gutta and, when the sun began to take effect, we were obliged to tie him like a sack across a mule to prevent him rolling over the first precipice. The morning proved rich in these, for we had to make a hairpin turn round the valley and climb the opposite ridge which dwarfed Ankober till its cylindrical rock looked like a torpedo plastered with molluscs where the mushroom huts cling obstinately. Omar and his mule fell into the stream in the gorge, but the cold bath had no more effect than the cold wind on the plateau, where the last monstrous sunflowers and two-foot thistles with balls of

purple fluff, left us in a land that appeared clean-shaven.

Seventy miles away, across the hill cones, we could see the white of Hawash desert and, in the opposite direction, the high lands unfolded, a clear amethyst, but barren like the ridge and furrow of some Herculean plough.

"The bad road is behind us!" said the *ballambarassi*, and we sighed our relief, for, of the mules we brought from Harrar, only six remained, and these looked like the relics of a Spanish bullfight. We had bought three more in Ankober and, just as we left the village, the Governor had sent a servant running after me with a fine strong beast, fourteen hands and over high, and a five-year-old, which he insisted was a gift that I might "keep Ankober in my heart." I was delighted and most grateful, but it took three men and an eye bandaged to get me on the "gift," which displayed horror at anyone mounting, but was an excellent riding animal, especially on the plateau where there was nothing to shy at.

I was so pleased with the paces of my new mount that I distributed piastres to every child who ran alongside, crying, "Alms and Mary will bless you!" but I was mildly surprised when a well-dressed citizen, brushed and oiled, came to me with outstretched hand.

"He wants to buy back his son," said Desta.

"What! is his son a slave?"

"*Marhaba!* No," laughed the others, and explained that a man sometimes vows his newly-born infant to God and, later, when he needs his services, redeems him from the Church at varying cost. Between the ages

of five and twenty a boy can be repurchased for about \$8.25, and a girl for \$12.25, but, in later years, the values are reversed and, between twenty and sixty, the man is worth about \$14.75, while the woman's price drops a little.

In Abyssinia charity is a cardinal virtue and, as among the Arabs, begging is profitable and legitimate. Any appeal finds an answer from this kind-hearted race, but, strongest of all, is the claim of the fugitive, provided he is free-born. I believe it is almost a religious principle with this inconsequent but charming people to help anyone to escape from justice! Perhaps this is because, in the country districts, blood feuds are recognized, though they are generally settled by payments of money. In such cases the total sum is shared on a basis of \$80 to the family of the deceased, \$20 to the Government, and \$20 to the local authority who has given judgment. In circumstances where lust of vengeance conquers the financial prudence which characterizes most Abyssinians, a blood feud is a hateful right descending to every male member of the family, so that a boy child may be killed at birth by some evil old woman bribed and smuggled into the household for the purpose.

The *ballambarassi* spoke of other strange customs as we plodded over shorn grass, between stretches of plough, where men worked with wooden picks, and women followed, shoveling the earth into heaps with bits of lath, but Omar sagged insensible, his head a swollen bundle, and the soldier, Gabra Gorgis' translations from the Amharic he partially comprehended into the Arabic he wholly misunderstood, were too startling for repetition.

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We rode for nearly eight hours, refreshed by a wind, thyme-scented and wine-strong, though Jones insisted that he felt like a soufflé surprise, burned and frozen at the same time! We did not dismount because the guardians of the caravan were so very wuzzy-headed that it was all they could do to walk themselves, oblivious of the increasing quantities of beasts they must have seen in front of them, to judge by their misdirected blows and shouts, but, as we rode, we ate hard-boiled eggs, and broke our finger nails, if not our teeth, on the last loaf from Hawash. I offered a share of these delicacies to the *ballambarassi*, but he gently waved them aside, with the reminder that it was a fast-day. These are rigorously kept in Christian Ethiopia, and on Wednesdays and Fridays neither milk, butter, eggs, flesh, fish, fowl nor grain may be eaten between dawn and nine p. m. I was told that 115 days of the year, which, by the way, begins on September 11th, are either fasts or feasts in Abyssinia and, from my three months' caravanning experience, I should think the former are by far the most numerous.

According to our English map, the distance between Ankober and Addis Ababa by the main route is $88\frac{1}{2}$ miles, but, averaging seven and one-half hours' march per day, we did it easily in four days, and tired baggage mules cannot go much more than two and a half miles an hour. On this basis, I think the distance is about 75 miles and I suggest that Ankober is considerably further west of Hawash than charted. It is a curious coincidence that, whereas we found the Ankober-Addis Ababa route thirteen miles shorter than we expected, the distance between Hawash and Ankober, by the map

not more than fifty-three miles, proved to be approximately sixty-six. Thus, cartographical irresponsibility added charm to our journey, for if we were stiff and cross and painfully conscious that an Abyssinian saddle consists of nothing but two bars of wood and the animal's chine, it was always possible that our destination might turn out to be just round the next corner or just over the next hill.

For four days we trekked across the plateau, its umber brown unbroken by any vegetation. Gabra Gorgis had wisely brought a bundle of firewood from Ankober and, with two or three sticks, he produced hot coffee and hotter stews, but the soldiers collected dung along the road for their night fires. Fences and mud huts had given place to rough stone-built compounds, wherein were grouped grass-roofed dwellings, still round but made of the local granite and sandstones. Each *tukel* was surrounded by miniature editions of itself for the storage of grain, flat dung cakes and barley beer, so that it looked as if the mushrooms had produced families which huddled as closely as possible under the parental eaves they copied. The whole land was golden with barley and the reapers worked knee-deep in it, toy sickles in their hands, sheep skins, very woolly and black, slung across their shoulders and tied by the legs in front.

During the first day Mt. Gumbibid lay in a welter of umber and purple to the south of us, and we camped in Tarra district between two wadis, where the water was particularly black and murky. The villages, still generically named, were Moslem, and we came upon their graves as nearly round as flower-beds, two stones indi-

cating a man and three a woman, "because it always takes more to keep a woman down than a man."

The plateau drifted up into strange shaped hummocks and the *ballambarassi* pointed out where Ras Tafari had escaped during his Sagali campaign against Ras Mickael, father of the lately deposed Emperor Lyg Yasu.

"In France you fought for seven years," he exaggerated, "but here in Abyssinia the battle lasted but two days, and then we took Ras Mikael and God made him die in prison."

The chief referred to began life as Ras Ali, King of the Wolla Gallas, but, conquered by Menelik and offered a choice between death and conversion to Christianity combined with marriage to the emperor's daughter, he decided that "*Paris vaut bien une messe.*" He took up arms again when his son by this marriage, who showed unpopular leanings towards Islam, was deposed in favor of the present empress.

"It was a good fight," concluded the *ballambarassi* dreamily. "Men hit with rifles and maxims, with spears and staves, and even stones from the ground."

The second night was spent at Shano, and here we had to leave Omar with a tent, and Gabra Gorgis, the soldier, to look after him, for, on the top of his drinking-bout, during which he had mixed the potent *araki* with his *tedj*, he had got fever and some form of heatstroke. As soon as it was light we visited the nearest house and implored shelter for our *khabral*, offering extensive payment, but the villagers were ruthless.

"Fire we will give, water and milk and food, but we have no place for the sick," they said, so I pressed dol-

lars into the black hands of Gabra Gorgis, urged him to hide them safely, and to bring Omar to Addis Ababa as soon as he could ride the mule.

"On my head and eyes," said Gabra Gorgis, "do not trouble, for I will bury him."

"Bury him!" I repeated.

"Oh, well, if the Lord chooses that he shall recover, I will bring him to you," amended the soldier, "but I see a grave in his eye."

He was right, for the unfortunate khabral died two days later.

Shano gave way to Tullofan where a few rosy eucalyptus quivered on the edge of Bulga gorge, a magnificent gash filled with red and purple crags, which widened as it ran southwest of us towards the plain. On to this we dropped suddenly by one of our old rocky chutes.

Where Eghersa spread its tufted trees round an old quaint church on a hillock, the mountains of Yerrer and far-off Zucqual beckoned us towards the capital. Our last camp was on a wide, golden stretch below the wood of Bakke Maryam, and I kept a watchful eye on the produce distributed by a generous headman. No *tedj* arrived, but we started next day with half a dozen swollen goats, so large that the men had been unable to eat more than two. Jones suggested that the others would prove excellent substitutes if the mules gave out before the elusive Barrak ridge, which had kept pace with us to the north for twenty miles, should at last be crossed.

"It is only four hours to Addis Ababa," agreed the whole caravan joyfully on the 23rd day of our march from Dire Dawa and the 18th from Harrar. A flock of

huge, grey cranes watched our departure, crows and hawks swooped over us, but alas, when five hours in a following wind had parched us, we were just climbing the mysteriously receding stones of Barrak! From the crest, we had our first glimpse of the eucalyptus woods, grey-blue and exquisite, in which the houses of the capital play hide and seek. Still another two hours and we were met by an envoy from Ras Tafari, a dignified personage, whose very white clothes showed up our dust and dirt. Only Gallan, who appeared mysteriously in immaculate khaki, and the *ballambarassi*, managed to look as if they had had recent connection with a wash-tub.

"Do you think I look better with a tie or without?" asked Jones anxiously, but I was wholly concerned with my boots which were splitting wherever possible.

The *ballambarassi* was eager to approach the town at a brisk amble, soldiers running in front and at our stirrups, but Jones' mule was finished.

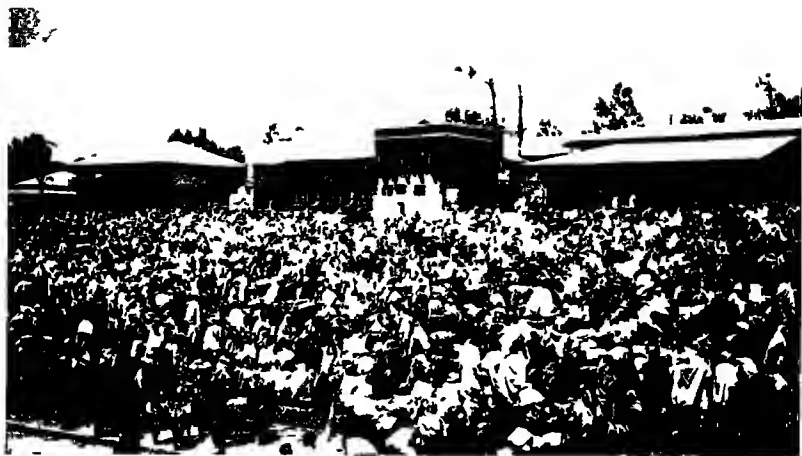
"Hold up its head," instructed our friend. "When it hangs it down, it remembers it is tired."

The animal responded to Jones' merciful touch on the bit, but town life was altogether too much for the nerves of my mule. It was market day and, amidst a pall of dust as stifling as a London fog, crowds of every description, carrying, leading, driving, pushing anything from furniture to sheep or what looked like haystacks, poured up and down the cobbled streets. At every fresh apparition such as a calf wound round a man's neck, or a sheaf of cane apparently walking by itself, my mount plunged and kicked, scattering beggars and affronting most dignified citizens, black caped, muffled

and masked in their *chammas*, who, with fly whisks flitting and toes secure in the stirrups, steered an effortless course. I am afraid we were not a credit to our master, but he was very kind and, at the end of the eighth hour, his reiterated assurances that the hotel was near, proved unexpectedly true.

We clattered through the last scented woodland, across a red gorge, up and down streets whose centres were unfinished embankments, the loose stones so thrown together that everyone struggled for the gutters, and between hundreds of mud huts, discreetly sheltered among the gums.

"*El Hamdulillah*—the hotel has arrived to us!" exclaimed Gallan, forgetting that he was a Christian. With a jerk which sent his saddle sideways, he descended to earth. "*Inshallah*, we shall stay here many days and I shall never see thee again!" He kicked his mule, which responded in kind and more effectively.



The life of Addis Ababa radiates from its markets with its packed thousands



The Modern Octagonal Cathedral at Addis Ababa



Washing day at Addis Ababa . . . the dark figures glistening after a vigorous scrubbing.



Grass and Parasol Market at Addis Ababa.

CHAPTER IX.

A FOREST CITY.

ADDIS ABABA, the "New Flower," became a capital in 1896 when Menelik extended the village he had created four years previously, forbade wood-cutting, and ordered the wholesale plantation of gums, so many by each family. It lies in a bowl between Entoto, 10,000 feet high, and other mountains which form the rims of the scented, shallow curve, lined by thousands of mushroom huts and tens of thousands of trees. The air is honey-sweet, and so strong that one forgets how little one can sleep at such an altitude—nearly 8,000 feet. The sunshine is palely dazzling without the usual black and white contrast of African light. The forest is like a myriad spears, their steel quivering in the wind and, amidst its metal blueness, are scars which are white stone-built houses roofed with corrugated iron, and mud specks which are huts. The little hills, down which the roads fling themselves in a tumult of rock and boulder, are dwarfed by the gibbe (palace) of the Empress. This is a conglomeration of different architectures, flat roofs, peaked, shed, house and pavilion, while the highest of all the buildings is like a Greek temple.

If all the cities of the world have some different and essential spirit, surely Addis Ababa's is the most elusive, for it is neither barbaric nor conventional, lawless nor

tame, but something sturdily independent, proud of a tradition which it takes for granted, unassuming beneath a varnish of self-consciousness. I did not stay long enough in the forest town to realize more than that, in her violent contrasts and in her gentle violence, Addis Ababa is typical of her people. There are a few modern buildings—a hotel, the bank of Abyssinia, the Legations, and, of course, the palaces of the royal family, but the huts outnumber them, smother them, as a self-sufficient simplicity outweighs the influence both of Africa and of Europe. Among the 60,000 inhabitants are a large quantity of Levantines, Armenians, Greeks and Syrians, as well as Indians and yellow-skinned Yemenese, but they are superimposed on the native life and remain detached from it, an excrescence though they control the business and industry of the capital. Were they swept away to-morrow, the essential Addis would be unchanged.

There are half a dozen motors, which progress tank-fashion over roads that are often either trenches or earth-works, but the camel is the four-wheeler, and the mule the taxi.

Topees and felt hats of all shapes and sizes go side by side with the priests' white turbans, with shaven head or curls close wound in the end of a *chamma*, but over every throng float the grass parasols, like sails bellying in the breeze.

The life of the city radiates from the markets, where are packed thousands of peasants, merchants, speared hillmen, men-at-arms; women on foot and on donkeys; my lord on a stallion, with squires at his stirrups, my lady, closely muffled on a mule, are wedged into

a human tapestry, but dominated by the palace and the churches. So the priesthood dominates a religious and little educated race, but always under the throne which theoretically owns all the land, has right of life and death over every subject and can claim his labor in peace, or his sword in war. It is a feudal system, framed by the astuteness of Menelik, who saw the danger of the hereditary races, each the war lord of his province, and gradually substituted his own governors, dependent on the central authority at Addis, but it is a feudal system administered by a liberal-minded Regent.

Africa is primitive and, below the surface, smoulder the embers of an ancient violence, but, here again, Abyssinia is not Africa, for, like the smiles and the gestures of her people, her violence is gentle.

The murderer may be hanged in public by a particularly slow and careless process, or handed over to an execution at the hands of his victim's family, which must be a replica of the crime he has committed, but the Abyssinians hate taking life. Rather than kill a horse with a broken leg, they will let it linger in uselessness, while no one would think of destroying any of the hordes of dogs which act as city scavengers, and make the night unbearable with their insistent barking. We heard of old tortures, now almost obsolete; we saw relics of these things, but, however stern and simple the justice of Ethiopia, its severity cannot be compared to that of Islam in fanatical Lybia and Asir, or in Raisuli's Moroccan mountains.

In Addis no one rides alone. Always a groom or a couple of serfs, a few riflemen or a boy with a fly-whisk run alongside, their number varying according to the

importance of their master, and no one walks who can afford any kind of beast. In fact I think it is bad form to have any walking muscles and, when the great are forced to take a few paces, they are supported under the armpits. Consequently traffic is congested, yet there are far more bows than jostling, and an unfortunate kick by the heels of his mule may land a rider in prison, or on the gallows, for accidental manslaughter is punishable as murder.

So, in this land of outward conflict and inward assurance, the contrasts between white robes and earthen huts, between the tentatives of modern science and the network of custom and tradition, even between Christianity and sunburned superstitious Africa, are all expressed in Addis Ababa. This woodland town is as complex and intriguing as the problems which beset her unconquered race.

Our first morning in Addis was spent in paying off the caravan, all of whom affixed greasy thumbmarks, by way of signature, to a receipt which ran into several pages of Amharic. After that we were free to go out fishing with the camera. Addis is a difficult place to photograph, because trees block every view, and distances are prodigious, when considered from muleback. It is nearly an hour's ride up and down hill and across rivers, from the hotel, markets and business quarter to the Legations, with their attractive gardens set in miles of woodland. On the way we found all sorts of excitements. A motor might be encountered, in which, case there was a pell-mell rush of riders for the nearest turning. Worse still, some misguided modern had introduced the first steam wagon, and the sight of this

half a mile away was sufficient to send every animal into convulsions. At the end of our first encounter with it, Jones was draped gracefully round the ears of his mule, with the saddle tangled in its mane, while I, having dismounted with much haste and no dignity, was attached to one end of a rein, while my beast sea-sawed between earth and sky, his velvet trappings slipping further tailwards with each plunge. The last of these landed us, inextricably confused, in the ditch.

"It is a country mule. It is not used to the town," said the charming stranger who rescued me.

"Perhaps it is a little bucolic," I retorted, dusting myself gingerly.

The river beds, narrow clefts between the rocks, were always amusing in the morning, when most of the population seemed to be engaged in washing, themselves, their clothes, or their household effects. The boulders were shiny with soap, the water foamed with it, and snow-white *chammas* drying in the sun contrasted with the dark figures of their owners, glistening after a vigorous scrubbing.

From eight o'clock the dust rose like golden pollen over flocks and herds coming into the city, with here and there a long-horned bull charging across the street till the ropes from horns and heels were taut in opposite directions, and this was always the moment chosen by a camel caravan to wind itself into the figure eight, so popular with these supercilious beasts. The grain market was a hive of industry up till noon and massed with donkeys bulging with leather sacks; Gourages, the porters and manual laborers of the capital, sturdy in their sheepskin coats; Galla women, the oil thick in their fuzzy

plaits; horses with their backs scarred as if by grids; attractive girls of the city with their neat ribbed heads, a baby or a gourd rolled up on their backs; the toga-like *chammas* of the citizen, and the tallow-stained shifts of the peasant.

Wandering, apparently quite happily, among this crowd were generally several couples of debtor and creditor or accuser and accused, linked together with a four-foot chain. In Abyssinia no one may be imprisoned until he is proved guilty, so this is a convenient method of ensuring that the defendant does not escape. If a man accuses a woman of some crime, he has to produce a female relation to be chained to her until judgment is given, while the reverse holds good, of course, in the case of masculine debtor and feminine creditor. The couple remain chained, night and day, and they are generally sent to live in the house of some mutual friend or other person of confidence.

Sometimes we passed impromptu courts of justice, conducted with much explanation and gesture in the midst of an interested crowd. On these occasions any passer-by may be called in as judge, to settle the disputed ownership of beasts, petty thefts or damage. He takes his duties seriously, and listens patiently to the various witnesses, who often illustrate their story, mimicking the dragging away of a sheep, and the purloining of grain, with much histrionic talent. Plaintiff and defendant may be called upon to back the truth of their statements in kind, so that if the first exclaims, "I will lay a sheep that my words are true," the judge may ask the second with how much honey, grain, or hides he will wager his accuracy. The loser forfeits not only his case,

but the livestock or produce with which he has backed it, but the verdict of the unofficial judge is always accepted.

Of course important cases go before a court, where the old religious, civil and penal code, based on Mosaic law, is administered by justices, the chief of whom is the Afa Negus, "Mouth of Kings", with priests as assessors, since only these can understand the obsolete Geze into which the 4th century Fetha Negast was translated at a later date. The sovereign alone can impose penalty of death, so murderers are sent to Addis to be tried, and the law decrees that these must be killed by the nearest relative of the murderer in the exact manner in which the victims were slain. In olden days this must have given rise to considerable cruelty, when the murderer was handed over to the vengeance of a distraught wife or father, but now, if the blood payment is not accepted, and if the crime is not one to necessitate a public hanging, the condemned is taken to the hollow beyond the railway station. His own people go with him to claim his body, the family he has wronged follow and, up to the last moment, there is wild argument between them, the one offering, the other refusing, bribes which increase in size as the parties approach the graves of the criminals' valley. Among these, the guardians of the law hand over the prisoner, or in some cases prisoners to the avenging families, and withdraw a few paces to watch that no torture is committed. The whole thing is done quickly and decently. The assassin is held down by stalwart relatives of the deceased, while the widow or head of the family deals the first blow with a knife, or shoots, according to how the original crime was com-

mitted. If necessary, as may be the case if a woman is avenging the stabbing of her husband, the murderer is despatched by other relations. The police then approach and demand if the punishment has been carried out. The avenger of son or brother announces, "Menelik, *yemut*," "By the death of Menelik, it is," after which oath, the most formidable in the Abyssinian vocabulary, the body is claimed by waiting parents, who have stood by to see fair play and if, by chance, breath still remains in it, as sometimes occurs if the unofficial executioner is old or excited, it is carried to the nearest hospital. Should the man recover he is considered to have paid the penalty, for with the dread "By the death of Menelik," the family of the murdered have acknowledged quit-tance of the blood debt.

While we were in Addis, one such execution took place beyond the gum-trees in the sunlit hollow. In this case, as the man was a notorious malefactor, a crowd of two or three hundred gathered at a distance. The condemned, with his arms pinioned behind him, had to be dragged down the slope by two guardians, during which process he shouted of the number of men, elephants and lions he had killed. A man with a sword stood by, while two relatives of his latest victim shot him through the head at a few inches range. The first rifle misfired, but death must have been instantaneous.

Immediately the executioners retired in favor of the dead man's friends, who carried him, under a sheet held like an awning, to where the grave-diggers were already working. The affair, primitive, humble and impressive, took three minutes from the first appearance of the condemned to the removal of his body.

No excitement or curiosity was displayed by the audience, for these men are accustomed to do all the business of their lives in public and in the open air. Not only this, but they like to settle such business themselves.

There are no lawyers in Addis Ababa, except in the Consular courts, which deal with disputes between their own nationals. In cases where a European and an Abyssinian are concerned, the former's consul is admitted as an assessor and, when his conclusion does not correspond with that of the Abyssinian President, the case is referred to Ras Tafari, soldier, statesman, social reformer, to whom the phrase might be permitted, "*L'état c'est moi.*"

I was anxious to meet the heir-apparent to such great difficulties, perhaps to greater opportunities, for I felt that he, representing the best and broadest of Abyssinia, might prove the key to her puzzle. I went to tea one afternoon in a big house on a hill, with a long European dining-room—white walls, chintzes and thick carpets—a charming room which looked on to a garden, beyond which were a lion-crowned gate and a section of khaki bodyguard. The Ras and his wife, the Princess Menen; were sitting side by side on a sofa, he in a big royal-blue cloak, she in a black one bordered with red, over a *chamma* fine as spiders' webs. They rose to welcome me and I found myself before a man of middle height, slight and strong, with slender, finely modelled hands that grasped mine firmly. Hands are very indicative of character and the Regent's are both practical and artistic. He did not misuse them in excessive gestures, but gave an impression of stillness and assurance. It was delightful to talk both to Prince and

Princess, for there was evidently much sympathy between them. They shared their interests and, best of all, their laughter. Ras Tafari talks French and Arabic and made use of both in his shrewd questions concerning my travels, but the Princess speaks through an interpreter. I remember we discussed Siam, which I had seen, and which interested them as a native, independent kingdom, cobwebbed in old customs, but attracted towards modern progress.

"I hope it won't develop too fast," I said, "the old traditions are so interesting."

The Ras smiled and his face lit up, till he no longer resembled the kings of Judah, three thousand years dead, who were his ancestors. The smile was keen and kind, and there was very nearly a twinkle in it, as he contested the charm of the new against the old, of the useful and productive against the wasteful and picturesque.

Servants brought in the most delicious tea I have drunk outside Hongkong, where tea-making is a rite, concerned with a score of canisters and half a dozen pots. While we ate particularly engaging cakes, rather shamefacedly, for our hosts fasted, I thought how curious it was to discuss motor routes and irrigation with a man whose features might have been stamped on Solomon's coins. Most of all, it was amusing to find that the Princess and I agreed on such divergent subjects as marriage and Palestinian personalities!

I rode back after sunset when the trees were a scented mystery and, between them, a thousand fires twinkled out of the huts. The smoke was like mist, eddying blue among the eucalyptus. Against the last stains of orange the spears were transferred into feathers, their

tips entangled in the jeweled net of the sky. The mule picked its way sedately. Its hoofs clopped to the accompaniment of a thread of sound, throbbing and insistent. It was a lyre played far up the hill, where flames shifted between smoke and shadow. I was impatient lest the footsteps shuffling after me should break the illusion. Scent and the silence of the forest were like an iridescent glass, blown so fine that a note of music might shatter it.

We passed into the market square. The Indian butchers were closing their shops. One came out with a pile of raw meat, which his law forbade him to keep till the morrow.

"Ya, butcha, butcha!" he cried, and again, "Butcha! Butcha!"

Shadows leaped at him. From every side came a flood of dogs. Wave after wave of furry shapes poured over the flesh he flung to them. There were growls, snarls, leaping animals tearing and mangling, another rush, a few slinking forms making off with their prey.

"Butcha! Butcha!" came the repeated cry.

Hundreds of the scavenger dogs responded. I kicked my mule into a trot in the wake of an illusion!

A voice spoke from the darkness of the hotel entrance, "Gabra Gorgis is in prison," it said.

"In prison," I gasped, wondering what frightful crime our cook had committed.

"Yes, the Abyssinians are not allowed to walk down the hill after dark without a permit, so surely now, since he is a stranger here, he is in prison!"

I laughed with relief. . . . After all the charm of an illusion is that it cannot endure.

The morning, fortunately, brought the release of our henchman, for which he was devoutly thankful, as prisoners are not fed by the State, but depend on their friends for supplies.

"Derselaam!" exclaimed the cook, "and I know no soul in the town except the son of my aunt, and he is dead!"

For a few hours he shadowed our footsteps, and even accompanied us when we went fishing with the six-inch lens, which enabled us to catch the sellers of honey and wax unaware, or the merchants haggling in a Bond Street of piled *chammas*, or the slave girls gossiping while their earthenware pots overflowed at the well. Traffic moves slowly in Addis, because friends stay to talk in the middle of the street, but these stalwart water-carriers, thick-ankled, shorn or curly-headed, always seemed to have more to say than anyone else. Gossip I suppose is the privilege of the confidential slave!

While we were watching the struggle at a well, where the water is free to all who are either sufficiently patient or sufficiently ruthless to get near it, Ras Tafari rode by. Half a hundred officers and chiefs rode with him. White-clad riflemen ran beside and behind. There must have been nearly a thousand of them, but they were lost among the crowd which surged around and among them. The Regent was stopped a dozen times by citizens, determined to lay some plea before him, and he responded with grave good humor, aware perhaps of the possessive feeling with which he is regarded. One man had walked all the way from Harrar to make his appeal, for, in the Ras' own prov-

ince, the sentiment is not so much that they are his people, but that he is their own, belongs to them, is the last and surest court of appeal, prince and brother, and man!

Gabra Gorgis, the black soldier, who was determined to miss as many trains back to Dire Dawa as possible, considered the Ras as a sort of feudal divinity, more easily approachable and much more logical than any celestial being. "If only I could speak to him, he would give me back my work," he said, and once again we heard the story of a post lost for most complicated and divergent reasons.

That night we dined with the Ras and Princess Menen. The electric light, gold plate, gold lettered menus wreathed in roses, printed by the Regent's private press, most of all the delicious food which made me suspect that a chef had been lured from Paris, showed our host's appreciation of Europe, but the crowd of servants in immaculate white and the gorgeous cloaks of the Abyssinian guests, Dejezmatch Haile Salessi, uncle of the Regent, and Feterari Desta Damtu, the good-looking husband of his thirteen-year-old daughter, introduced a touch of Africa.

While we drank champagne or *tedj* and ate the most marvellous creamy concoctions out of Venetian glass, we talked of Abyssinia.

"She seems to me so self-sufficient," I said. "You need Europe less than any other country I know."

"We need European progress only because we are surrounded by it," said the Ras. "That is at once a benefit and a misfortune. It will expedite our development, but we are afraid of being swamped by it."

"There is no fear of that, for it is only the townsman who is adaptable. Show him that a thing is good and he will at once adopt it, but no flood of modernity could sweep the peasant off his feet!"

"Yes," agreed the Regent, "there is a great difference between the two. The citizen is not afraid of the new. He is the least fanatical of people, always ready to welcome Europeans and to profit by their knowledge."

"In one way peasant and townsmen are alike. They both have the qualities of a ruling race," I add.

The Ras asked for explanation.

"The Arabs are the people I know best," I replied, "so I judge Eastern peoples by comparison with them. Arab and Abyssinian are equally hospitable, but the former is afraid of foreigners and very suspicious of them, because he is not sure of himself. Whereas your people, at least in the south, are broad-minded in their attitude towards strangers."

"In fact their assurance approaches arrogance," suggested the Ras. "It is a pity that they have had to learn that there are adventurers among the 'red men' as they call you. Originally we took our knowledge of Europe from the chivalrous Portuguese, who helped us in our long wars against Islam, and from the Jesuits who accompanied them—the most intellectual of the priesthood—but, since those days, all sorts of foreigners have come here, and the Abyssinian has had to learn to distinguish between them."

I quoted the Arab saying, "a man must learn from his pocket."

The Ras smiled. "All knowledge is good," he said, and told me of the means he was taking to encourage it.

He has built a hospital near his house to supplement the excellent American organization under Dr. Lamb, for which the Crown gave a grant of land. His printing-press is designed for the publication of educational works, but, in order to propitiate the clergy, who are opposed to any innovation, at present, it is dealing only with religious books.

"The church stands for freedom, the clergy for slavery!" interpolated an Abyssinian.

A college for one hundred students is in course of construction, electric light is being planned for the town. A flour-mill and wood-working machinery have been imported, as well as pumps and pipes to supply the town with water, and a large cotton plant, consisting of forty-two machines, destined to deal with all stages of cotton manufacture. I believe the idea for the last originated with the Empress, who was much concerned for the people, when, three years ago, the price of *abugedid*, the coarse white sheeting chiefly of Japanese or American manufacture from which all trousers and shirts are made, rose to 13 reals a length. She ordered wholesale planting of cotton and began to plan the construction of a factory for ginning, spinning and weaving the home-grown material.

"Will it pay?" I asked the Ras.

"Nothing new ever pays," he answered. "This is an educational experiment. I want to teach the people the value of industry. At present the majority bury, or otherwise hide their money. They've no other idea of investment than to loan it to anyone who will promise them high interest."

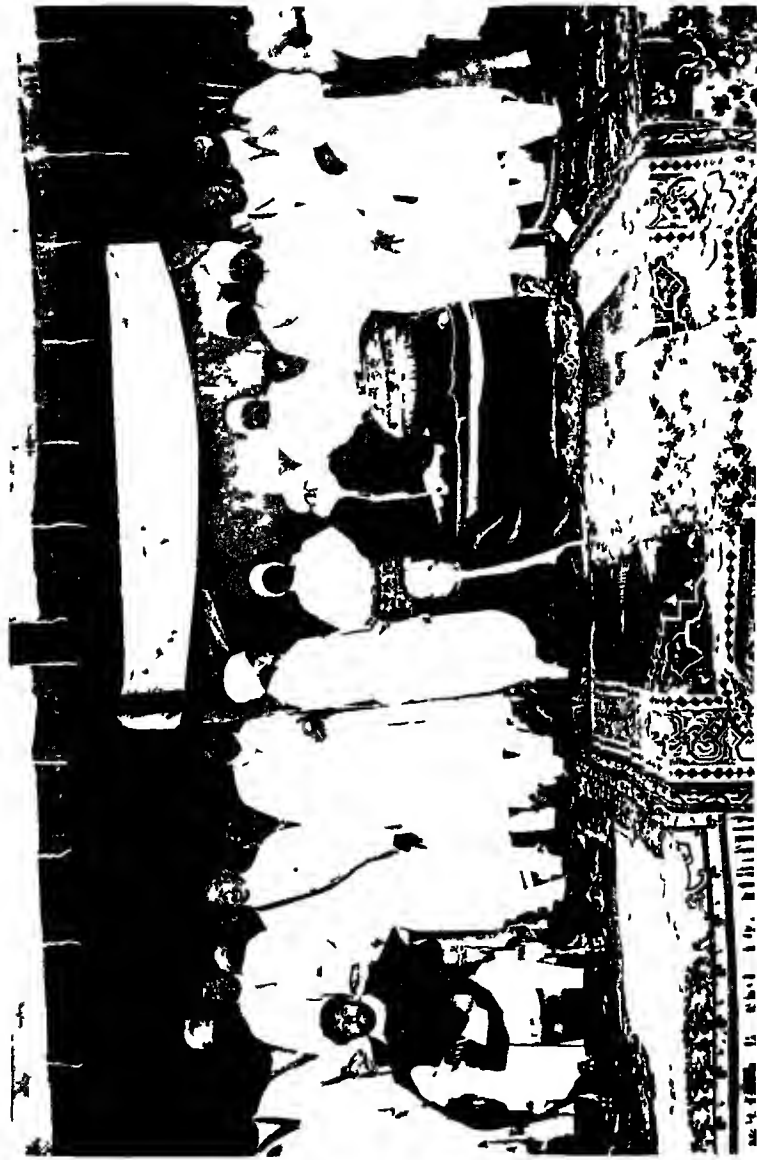
"It will be splendid if you can interest them in trade."

"A beginning has been made. The market used to be open only one day a week and the town was deserted for the other six. Now you see the streets full of merchants, always ready to do business. I am encouraging every new form of commerce, after the example of the Emperor Menelik, who used to remit customs on any original goods imported into the country. He gave loans to merchants who wanted to start on progressive lines and told them, 'bring all new goods to me. I will see they are sold. Don't be frightened of innovations.'"

"He must have been a remarkable man," I said.

"He was, and he had complete power over his people. He could do what he liked with them."

Menelik, of course, had the prestige of a conqueror and this counts for much in Abyssinia, where every man is a soldier, but, though his victories and the glamour of his personality united the country, he could not make a nation out of it. He left to his successor a heritage of problems, first among them the responsibility of ruling such races as Galla, Dankali, Somali and Shanakil, unlike in religion, language, and mentality. He left a country loosely knitted together and so recently that the stitches are still visible. Whether they will prove durable is as yet uncertain. Tigre, Shoa, Amhara have so long been different kingdoms, temporarily united from time to time by emperor or king, that it is doubtful if anything but a common enemy, or the dread of European absorption, could weld them into one nation. Racially the Shoan stands apart, for he has intermarried with the wild races on his borders and there is a strong negroid tincture in his blood. Though Amharic is the *langage diplomatique* of Abyssinia, each old kingdom



H. M. Empress Zaiditu (on divan) with H. I. H. Ras Tafari, seated on left



Native Musicians at Addis Ababa

has its own dialect, besides which there are Geze, the language of priests, also spoken in Tigre; Arabic and Galla, both known outside the bounds of their peoples; Tigri, which is more than a dialect, and such tongues as Gouragi, Harrari, Dankali, and others. Apart from the subject races, each Abyssinian state has its hereditary influences and interests, and the welter of past jealousies, racial or family, contribute to the political disorders of to-day. The feudal lords of the north represent the curtailment of their powers and the centralization of authority in Addis.

The Regent is therefore faced with the problems, not only of the present, but of the unyielding past. He has to deal with character, and human nature is immutable, except in a crucible of war or other emotion. The peasants, who are the backbone of Ethiopia, are biblical in their pastoral simplicity, contented with the sunshine and their marvelous climate, dull-witted, sometimes courteous and hospitable, sometimes uncouth and surly. Money is a passion with most of them, but, in the wilder districts, it is represented by cartridges or other local necessities. The townfolk are curious, interested in anything new for a time, but they are cautious and rarely frank. It is very difficult to induce an Abyssinian to express his real thoughts and intentions. Partly out of innate politeness, he invariably says "yes," and of course it is not always possible for him to carry out his promises. No Abyssinian understands the value of time—to-day, to-morrow or next year are the same to him.

Before I left Addis Ababa, I came to the conclusion that the reigning Empress, Zaiditu, daughter of Menelik, had inherited many of her father's qualities. Tact-

ful and shrewd, she is at once the motive force behind many schemes for social improvement, and the mediator between the priests who represent the old world and the Regent urging the claims of the new. Her statecraft is so clever that, while she approves and aids Ras Tafari's policy of development, she is still the champion of tradition. Very wisely she deals with the older clergy, hedged in by custom, telling them: "Let us wait and see if this new thing does not turn out to be good." No one criticizes her. Lonely, aloof, a little pathetic in a state and dignity which she uses as a background, conscious of its value, but never, I think, overwhelmed by it, she is a force which counts in Ethiopia and which will be largely responsible for its independent progress. "Small I am like Queen Victoria," she is supposed to have said on her coronation, "great like her I hope to be."

While we were in Addis Ababa, the Empress and her court were in mourning for the seventh anniversary of the death of Tahitu, Menelik's consort, in memory of whom a great feast was to be held at which five or ten thousand people would be fed. Custom insists that the reigning sovereign shall take part in every form of national life, so the Empress was busy supervising the hospitable preparations, and would see no one, not even her ministers. "I am busy in the kitchen," she reproved those who sought audience, but the courtesy which is an Abyssinian characteristic caused her to send us a message that, if we cared to come to the palace at seven next morning, she would receive us before beginning the work of a long and varied day.

We got up with the sun and rode below a canopy of gums. The mists woven with the shuttles of dawn hung

cold between lilac and cactus hedges. It was a blue world, where the huts were damp toadstools in a forest. Men rode muffled to the eyes in their cloaks. As we climbed up towards the Gibbe, to which all roads seem eventually to lead, we passed some one hundred slaves bearing red-swathed baskets on their heads—bread for the palace breakfast, or perhaps for the morrow's feast. The sentries at the gate were shrouded in hoods and cloaks. Through a succession of irregular, stone-walled yards, full of riflemen, splendidly trapped mules, servants and officials, we were led by an usher, whose long wand was often used to make way for us. The Gibbe covered a square mile or more of ground, and in the center of its maze of courts, among acres of thatch, mud, iron and stone, are the two pavilions, with outside staircases and tiered balconies in which the Empress lives.

Zaiditu, daughter of Menelik, the lion of Judah, Queen of the Kings of Ethiopia, received us on the second floor, in an octagonal pagoda-like room, spread with fine carpets and hung with portraits of Menelik and his consort. There was no furniture except the three seats placed for us and the lower chair on which the Empress was enthroned, her feet on a velvet cushion, behind her one lady in waiting, on either side, her chamberlains and priests.

Zaiditu, like so many of the queens of history, is very small, but her stature is magnified by an impressive dignity of manner. When we were presented to her, her mourning necessitated a plain, dark cloak, and only her eyes and cheeks appeared between the muffling folds of gauze. Even the hand we touched was covered in the same white, silky stuff, but the great black eyes, set

powerfully under a broad forehead, were characteristic. They were intelligent and quiet, with the wisdom of a 3000-year-old descent and the peace of much thought. The audience was short, for the Empress insisted that she must set an example of industry to the domestic hive which stirred and ground, baked, roasted and brewed. After a few minutes talk about my travels and gracious wishes for the northern journey, which she and the Regent had done everything in their power to facilitate, she left us to photograph the town from her balcony.

At last we had found the one uninterrupted view in Addis Ababa, for, beyond the palace roofs, the trees dropped to a ravine and climbed again, rank after steel blue rank, to the houses and the markets and, crowning all, the octagonal cathedral, backed by the mountain mists. We saw the tiny figure of the Empress pass across the yard, a velvet umbrella, fringed green and black, held over her head, a group of courtiers around her. On one side the lions of her country roared from their cages. On the other a hornbill marched along the grass, ruffling its feathers in the sun. The painted woodwork was gilded. The soldiers bared their heads as they sat in rows along every wall. Priests began to chant near the massive throne-room, which opens onto a sheet of mountain and valley. A smell of incense drifted into the air, and other more savory odors came from the town of canvas which constituted the banquet hall. Small boys pushed past us, very important with their burdens swathed in velvet. A few rose petals fluttered at our feet and I remembered the rose used to be sacred in old Tigre where incense was made of the

petals. It was all very simple and its simplicity saved it from being tawdry or barbaric.

The palace courts were fuller on the afternoon we went to visit the Itchegue, the Administrator of the Abyssinian Church, who controls all clerical property and staff.

The funeral feast was finished. Hundreds of priests, thousands of chiefs, officials and their followers had been fed on the raw meat which makes warriors, washed down with golden, insidious *tedj*. The men-at-arms were smiling, fatuous and loud-voiced, the slaves could not control their laughter. In each dark face the mouth gaped full and red, while the bloodshot eyes were bold. The lions, too, had been gluttoned with fresh meat and they took no interest in the throngs which passed their cages. Satisfied and full-lipped, the courtiers, in their white robes, were talking lazily, with vague smiles. The Empress had presided on a curtained dais, high above the carpeted canvas hall, where, across trestle tables lined with guests, slaves presented raw carcasses of oxen, slung from poles and covered with strips of silk and velvet, to the ready knives and teeth. Now she had retired to her own rooms, and court and street were crowded with her departing guests.

"His Holiness awaits you," smiled a bowing usher, as we watched peaked capes of riders go bobbing down the hill above the gleam of rifle barrel or silver prayer sticks.

In the thirteenth century, the sainted Tekla Haimanot ordained that the Ethiopian archbishop, the Abouna, should always be an Egyptian appointed by Alexandria, as a link between the Coptic Church of Egypt and

the Abyssinian Monophysites who acknowledge the immaculate conception of the Virgin, concede but the one nature to Christ, ordain that priests must marry as deacons once for eternity, and were condemned as heretics by the sixth century Council of Chalcedon. Tekla Haimanot, fearing that the isolated position of his country might cut her off from civilization, proffered as a remedy the continual introduction of Alexandrine culture, so the Abouna is, as ever, an Egyptian from the desert monastery of St. Anthony, knowing little of local custom. Consequently the functions of the Itchegue, sometimes called the Black Pope, are comprehensive and important. His writ runs through every church in a land said to contain a million religious subjects, and it went with us, inscribed under a golden seal, to help us in our work.

The Itchegue received us in a panelled room faintly scented, as if with the breath of old ritual. A velvet cloak, gold-edged and embroidered, fell to his feet. His high white turban was covered with a flowered veil and he held an exquisite golden cross. Beside him was a table laden with leather-bound manuscripts, the characters painted or inscribed on vellum. Against the wall crouched several priests in saffron cloaks, relieved by the great square crosses of Abyssinia. The Itchegue approved of our project to cinema for the first time the rock-hewn, thirteenth century churches of Lalibela.

"If you go as far as that," he said, "you will see the best that is in our country," and we noticed how keenly he observed us under lids drooped in apparent indifference.

"I understand the power of the Church if she has

many men like that," I said to Jones as we rode through the thronged enclosures, where rifles and peaked cloaks of warriors' turbans and satin capes of priests, cream, embroidered *chammas*, velvet saddle-cloths fringed with gold, or white ones splashed with great crimson crosses, were blended into a sun-gilt tapestry.

The Ras had sent us two horses as a parting gift, a beautiful gray racer, which was a delight to ride, and a sturdy chestnut, and while I was still breathless with appreciation of so royal a gift, the *ballambarassi* arrived with several mysterious parcels.

"They are from Waizeru Menen," he said. "Just in memory of your visit."

I opened the most intriguing bundle and found an exquisite Abyssinian dress of softly flowered brocade, embroidered at the edge, like all court robes, with purple, blue, and gold. There was also a *chamma*, spun out of moonbeams by fairy spiders, and barred with peacock blue and green, woven or embroidered, I couldn't tell, but incredibly fine. Another parcel contained a black satin cloak, short, with a peaked hood, and a pair of trousers, also of black satin, very narrow at the ankle, where they were thickly embroidered. I could hardly wait to express my thanks before turning the *ballambarassi* out of the room in order to try on my new treasures, but he stopped me, laughing, as I almost pushed him to the door.

"There is more," he said. "Wait!" and, from a little basket, he produced a necklace entirely made of old carved gold crosses. It was a delightful example of the native jeweler's art and the finishing touch to the dress.

"It's too lovely!" I said, "I adore it, but you simply must go, so that I can begin to dress up."

The gentle face with the big brown eyes flashed into merriment.

"So you are a woman after all," said the *ballambarassi*, "I thought you were much too fierce to care about silks!" and he shut the door before I could ask for explanation.

Our last two days in Addis Ababa must surely have consisted of more than the usual amount of hours, for we rode an incredible number of miles on mules loaned by the Regent, who generously considers himself the host of any strangers visiting his country, and we hunted pictures with grim determination. The Saturday market provided a varied bag, for there must be ten to fifteen thousand people buying and selling in every street square, and in the great field beyond the usual markets. It would be impossible to describe the variety of goods sold, for they range from livestock, goats, sheep, oxen, horses, mules, donkeys, the grain and hay they eat, the red-covered saddles and bridles they wear, to grass parasols, monster clay pots and baskets nearly as large as a Dankali house, or cloaks, capes and *chammas*, civet wax, skins, shields, swords, herbs, spices, kohl, incense, jewelry, charms, and all forms of produce. There are European goods, too, in rows and rows of little booths, and, beyond them, sheepskins, gourds, raw cotton, the cut shrub that is put into *tedj*, honey in leather bags, new made rope, fish that looks rather exhausted, sugar cane, and always lines of wizened old women selling mysterious ground-up trifles heaped on grass platters, condiments perhaps, or those nameless

flavorings for which Gabra Gorgis, the cook, was always demanding piastres. When the markets failed us, we scoured the hillsides for industries, photographed the pottery workers and the brewers of *tedj*, who light a fire of green leaves in the mouths of their jars before pouring honey and water into the smoky depths, the silversmiths and scabbard makers, and even the hard-worked mothers of families, who smilingly consented to bake wafer-thin bread in ovens that looked like two clay plates, or grind grain into flour between a couple of stones, under the eye of Jones' camera.

"Well, are you satisfied?" I asked Jones as our second relay of mules crawled homeward in the sunset. Our first appointment had taken the place of breakfast, and lunch, if we had eaten it, had made no impression on me. My lips were stiff with dust, everything else caked with it. A donkey had kicked me in the market and I was sore.

"Satisfied? Um—yes. We've got some good stuff."

A scarlet face peeling several skins at once was turned to the sky. "I wonder if there's just enough light to get that——."

"No," I retorted, "I'm d——d if there is!"

CHAPTER X.

THE JERUSALEM OF ABYSSINIA.

MY last night at Addis Ababa was spent at the British Legation, the most attractive of houses inside, as it is built round two little courts, gay with flowers, the one inhabited by some parakeets, the other by an antelope. Outside, the terraces are edged with earthenware jars full of nasturtiums and, below these, the blue gums drop away to the thatched and white-washed abode of the Oriental Secretary. Under the shadow of his glorified *tukels*, a series of delicious round rooms are joined by passages. Jones camped with such of our new retinue as could be dragged from the bosoms of their families.

Next day, owing to the hospitality of the British Minister and Mrs. Russell—how I hated dragging myself away from their hot baths, their chintzes, and their rose-bowls, their crisp curly bacon which makes an egg so much more engaging!—we were able to load our mules with a minimum of noise and delay. Mr. Zaphiro, the Oriental Secretary, had organized the whole of the caravan for me, and provided a servant called Balaina with half a dozen *sabaniers*, a sort of unofficial policemen, to take the place of our soldiers.

This time we had two head *nagadis*, Atto Belacho and Atto Daiwitu. The former was a shrewd and sometimes surly individual, whose head was too hard

for him to see beyond the price or profit of to-day, but his smile was engaging, and he was an excellent judge of a mule, of human weaknesses and of how often and how early it was safe to say his mules were tired. His friend was very different. Whenever things were at their worst, Daiwitu's long, thin form, agile as a grasshopper, hairless as a nut, was in half a dozen places at once, shrilling jokes, encouraging, minimizing the extent of the disaster with cheerful humor. He never appeared tired and was never cross, though he did more work than anyone else. Because of such activity he was the most cut, rent and tattered by our prolonged battle with the thorns and rocks of Abyssinia, but indifferent to the gradual elimination of his garments, he wound the fragments into a sort of rope corselet and sprang about as busily as the bare brown insects he resembled.

There were several satellites attached to the *nagadis*, but they were generally either far in front weighed down with tent poles, so long and unwieldy that their porters were automatically isolated, or reloading some invisible but audibly protesting beast which had rid itself of its incumbrances in the bush. Among them were two black slaves, so simian in appearance that one could never believe they were more than dull-witted and friendly animals. Incredibly short and stocky, their round heads with the wool rubbed off in patches, were set between their shoulders without any apparent necks. Their mouths, with wide-apart white tusks, were always open, their eyes goggled under strips of forehead reduced to a few wrinkles, and their paws—it would be incorrect to say hands—were furry and

short-fingered, but very tenacious of such food as came their way! In the hottest weather, when everyone else gasped for air and the relief of a cloud, they wore shaggy skins across their shoulders with legs, hoofs and tails dangling. I don't know if they were capable of coherent speech, for I never heard them do more than grunt "au" (yes) and "eshe" (all right) except when they added to the indiscriminate babel of a caravan dispute.

The servant, Balaina, meant well. His good intentions lined his forehead till it seemed to disappear altogether into the dust and curls of his head. They reduced his face to plaintive despair and his Arabic, of which he was very proud, to two fatal words, *astowi*, by which he meant anything active, such as to make, do, run, put up, take down, clean, full, brush, etc., ad infinitum, and *agliss*, which represented everything passive, and consequently even more than the mysterious *astowi*. The good intentions materialized no further than packing lidless tins or corkless bottles, and being touchingly grieved at the mess which resulted, or laying with the utmost tenderness, the medicine chest and all other cases on their heads. Of course he lost every adjunct that was not, literally, soldered to its principal. His mule ran away regularly, and he walked patient and unnecessary hours without protest. He cut himself with the bluntest and most harmless objects and suffered without a murmur. In two minutes he was capable of wrecking the orderly arrangements of a tent more effectively than a hurricane and, after six weeks of camping, he still, with the utmost regularity, fell over each rope in turn. To question or order he

always answered *taib* (good), and, if he had been asked to bring the moon as a second course for dinner, without the slightest hesitation or comprehension, he would have hurried off to ask Gabra Gorgis where he could get the sun!

The only member of our old caravan who went with us was Gabra Gorgis, the cook, chiefly because, though dismissed, tipped and blessed, he placidly refused to leave! The place of the unfortunate Omar was taken by a wizened, unsmiling, little old man who spoke bad English, and was called Hassen. He was the most remarkable of our very mixed retinue. His mother was an Arab, he had the primitive Moslem outlook, joined to the simplicity of the very stupid and very honest. He had been born at Aden, had seen enough of other countries to speak of his fellow Abyssinians as "these savage people", and could be relied on always to do his best under any circumstances, but with the most startling and unexpected results. As I picked up a little Amharic, I found his translations an even greater embarrassment than the amazing products of his labors!

The six *zabaniers* were less interesting. The nicest of them, Woldo Selessi, acted as groom, and he was the only Ethiopian of his class between Addis Ababa and Asmara who neither directly nor indirectly asked me for anything. There was another, Demessi, bearded, pleasant and lazy, who always offered me flowers whenever he had evaded more work than usual; a cobbler, Heile Mariam, without whose needles and thread we should have arrived in Asmara with enough holes to supply a year's output of Gruyère cheese, and an old man, lean and worn, Atto Heilu, who was as devout and ubiquitous

ous as his name. One of the others, Woldo Gorgis, brought his own servant, and his own mule, which he rode in state and of the sixth, I learned nothing except that he was very black and most persistent with regard to baksheesh and to bargaining. He exacted a maximum from both donor and seller, and was thrifty with his work, but not with his time!

We left Addis Ababa, rich in parting gifts, books and a map from the Minister, matches from his wife—I had forgotten the exorbitant demands of Jones' pipe! At the last moment the Zaphiros piled tinned tongues, honey and crème Simon into our most willing hands—the final gift saved from peeling what I am sure must have been my last layer of skin! Amidst a chorus of good wishes, at eight a. m. by my watch, which I think was conveniently slow, we plodded out of the Legation gates, a caravan of twenty-one mules, two saddle horses, and fourteen muleteers, slaves, *sabaniers* and servants. The faithful *ballambarasi* insisted on riding with us for the first hour, and his numerous escort ran behind, lending a picturesque touch to our packing cases and tins. At the foot of Entoto we parted, very regretfully on our side, for Gabra Selessi, with his wistful smile, had been the kindest and most patient of fellow-travellers.

With clouds and sunshine racing over us, we climbed the mountain, paused between its two churches for a last backward glance at Addis Ababa—distance and a greater height had flattened out its hills so that the forest was like a rug amidst whose tufts a child had built toy houses—and went north across the uplands, rolling grass on every side and wind-swept round-backed ridges. I rode the gray racer, gift of the Regent, and, as I can-

tered lightly ahead of the caravan, I decided that it needs several weeks on mule back to make one realize the delight of a good horse. A mule combined with a native saddle is like riding a lump of dead weight, leavened with obstinacy and aches! Jones made great progress on the chestnut, though he assured me that it was only the third time he had ridden, and that he had "continually to look round to be sure he was still in the saddle"! The men walked well and were unbelievably amiable when we announced our wish for an eight hours' march. None of the mules had sore backs, no loads upset. We rubbed our eyes and wondered if we were dreaming when, at four o'clock, after a monotonous but peaceful trek through a boundless, treeless land, we camped by the deep stream of Kaga, and the tents went up as if by magic, the *nagadis* ran for water, one mended my revolver holster, another cut grass for our horses.

"I never realized before how bad that old scoundrel was!" remarked Jones, referring to Ham the son of Noah, the *nagadi* who had brought us with sore backs and sore tempers from Dire Dawa.

"Do you think it'll last?" I asked dubiously.

Our troubles, and very serious they were, began when, in accordance with the strict commands of that pearl among Oriental Secretaries, who had furnished my caravan down to the last rope and sandal, tent-pole and water-bottle, I sent Hassen with one *sabanier* to buy barley for the horses. After some hours, when it was quite dark and I had got tired of studying a map which showed only a blank space between Entoto and Debra Libanos, the old man returned, pale and stammering.

"There has been much trouble——" he began. "The

chief of the village was away, the people are bad, and they would not sell me anything. I showed them your pass from Ras Tafari, but they could not read and they wanted to keep it."

Instinctively I put out my hand for the precious paper.

"Haven't you got any barley?" I asked, by this time used to stories of villagers being savage because, perhaps, they could not understand a townsman's glibness.

"Barley!" stuttered the frightened man, "I have nothing, and God knows what has taken place. They took hold of me and beat the *sabanier*, and there was a fight——"

"Malesh. It doesn't matter," I replied, sniffing the hot macaroni Balaina was just placing on our restored table of film cases. "At least, I suppose you're all here unhurt?"

"Yes, there is no one missing," murmured Hassen, and disappeared as quickly as possible.

I thought no more of the matter, though Jones told me that he had heard distant shouting, and seen the remaining *sabaniers* race off with loaded rifles.

Gabra Gorgis made such strong coffee, and the muleteers talked so much that I spent a restless night. Roused by a struggle with my glissading flea-bag, I saw what appeared to be faint green dawn-light called my usual reveille proud of so early an awakening, dragged myself wearily out, and, to my horror, found a midnight moon and an extremely surprised cook!

"Have you had a nightmare?" came a sleepy voice from the twin green tent.



The Pottery Market at Addis Ababa



Gibhe (palace) of the Empress Zaiditu on the hill in the background.



In the morning I tried to tell my experience to Jones. He laughed. It was very nearly a snort. 'You must have had a nightmare,' he said.



Second crossing of the Blue Nile. A 17th century Portuguese bridge.

As soon as the mules were loaded next morning—and it was a neat and beautiful loading, so that we were ready before seven—the interpreter suggested that he should ride ahead to a big village we should pass at noon, interview the headman, and buy barley, chickens, eggs. With memories of a Lenten breakfast, and the absence of all prospects of lunch, since Gabra Gorgis, of course, had let escape the town-bred poultry yard, with which we had left hospitable Addis. I agreed. Very quickly and quietly Hassen slipped away, with a *zabanier* in attendance, and, since he was only to precede us by an hour, he took with us the talismanic pass.

Gaily we rode up the broad track, Jones and I ahead, the horses dancing in the cold, sunlight creeping after us. The three men carrying the cinema and a groom leading our mules were with us. The caravan lumbered behind.

Suddenly a crowd came running down the slope, shouting and waving their spears. In a moment we were surrounded. Hands grabbed at our bridles. Inveective was hurled at our escort. Fortunately the horses plunged free.

“Get out!” I said to Jones, afraid that he might lose his seat. “Stay well ahead.”

A *zabanier* tried to interpret. “They say we killed a man in their village last night—it is not true. They beat us——”

His voice was drowned in clamor. A score of men shouted together. Two or three, wild-eyed and blood-shot, threatened me with their spears. No one dared approach the grey’s heels, but the circle round me was augmented each moment by fresh enemies, and still

others appeared on the hillsides. I could not make myself heard above the tumult. The groom's hands were full, but he tried to edge nearer, explaining that I must not attempt to go on.

At last the caravan arrived, and Gabra Gorgis, pale with excitement, precipitated himself to my side. The *nagadis* wanted to pass us, but a dozen hands flung them back. One man raised his rifle.

"Put it down, you fool!" I yelled at him, none too soon, for a score of spears flashed up and, among many blows, one fell across my shoulder. This was lucky, for it frightened our assailants and, in the pause, the chief of the village rushed up, a slender, shaven youth who tried to restrain the rage of his people, while insisting that we should not move.

"Where is Ras Tafari's paper? That will save us?" shrilled Gabra Gorgis.

"In the pocket of the interpreter," I retorted grimly, "miles away I should think."

Jones circled anxiously nearer.

"Keep clear," I counselled. "It looks as if we might have to do a bolt."

The babel of voices took on a wilder note. The mules broke loose and added to the confusion.

"What exactly do they want?" I made Gabra Gorgis understand.

"They insist that you go back to their village and stay there. They want to seize all our *sabaniers* and take them into Addis Ababa."

I thought rapidly—if we went back to Kaga and a man had really been killed, we should soon be surrounded by half the countryside, all hostile and, with-

out the government passport or the Regent's special paper, we should be defenceless. I tried to draw the chief aside, spoke quietly to the older men, but in vain. Then, to test the situation, I told them their demands were impossible and, since they would not talk sense, I could waste no further time. The grey reared a passage and I joined the watchful Jones.

"I couldn't go on without you," he said.

"Well, let's try now and see what happens."

"We put our horses to a trot. Instantly figures sprang to every vantage point. Cries rang out an alarm which might rouse the whole district. A youth ran after me, imploring.

"Do not go! I pray you, do not try to go!" and his eyes were terrified.

I went back and, for another half hour, the mob whipt themselves with words to a wilder inarticulacy. I wondered if they were all drunk before they confronted us. The situation was getting worse. By now two villagers were said to be lying dead in their *tukels* as a result of last night's battle, and I was only just able to prevent the *nagadi* piling the few rifles of the caravan into the angry hands outstretched for them. Seizing Gabra Gorgis by the shoulder, I forced a way for both of us in front of some elders, who, I thought, were attempting to make themselves heard. So far, I had tried being very quiet and terse, but now, standing up in my stirrups, an arm raised above my head, I fairly let myself go. I swore by everything that I could think of from Heaven to Ras Tafari, that, though I knew nothing of the fray, I would not leave my servants in their hands. More and more melodramatic I grew, as

I saw the effect of my preposterous eloquence. Gabra Gorgis translated faithfully and when, for want of breath, I stopped, there was almost a silence. The chief suggested that four soldiers should be left, with their rifles, as hostages, and that the caravan should proceed. Once again, I burst forth—would they send a woman, young, alone, the guest of their prince, through a country strange to her, with no one to protect or serve her. I imagine Gabra Gorgis improved the theme with tales of our importance and the Ras's special protection. A lull followed and I took advantage of it to demand pencil and paper. The first was forthcoming, but the latter resolved itself into a crumpled scrap of shaving-paper produced by Jones. On this I scrawled a note to Mr. Zaphiro, thrust it into the headman's hands, and told him to pick out the two *zabaniers* whom he accused of murder and take them with my letter to Addis Ababa. During the wrangle which followed, I signalled to the caravan to proceed and, eventually, an hour late, and a couple of policemen short, we continued our journey.

"There were moments when I thought we were in for it," said Jones.

"Or do you think the whole thing was a put-up job to get baksheesh for a couple of broken crowns?" I suggested. "I must say, though, nobody said a word about money."

In close formation we rode up hill and down. Then the youthful headman ran after us with hostages and a letter. He was no longer drunk with his own and his people's eloquence. The cold tide of reaction had set in, and he was wondering what reception his

story, probably without the backing of two corpses, would receive at Addis Ababa. There were very muddled explanations which added to the mystery, and we continued on our way, much puzzled.

For seven hours we trekked through grass country, broken into ridge and hollow, relieved here and there with thorn trees or a patch of flaming lilies. By noon we had crossed the gorge of Dubber, watered the animals at its stream and passed between the main cluster of houses, but there were no signs of our interpreter. Persistent inquiries along the track and through the many villages of Wuchali, failed to elicit any information. He had disappeared. When, in an eggless, chickenless land we camped beside some muddy water which we were told was still Wuchali, we were offered two suggestions by a gloomy caravan, either that he was drunk and senseless in some hovel along the road, or that, terrified of the results of last night's fight, he had fled back to the capital. I inclined to the former theory, and avowed vengeance, while I struggled with insensate villagers who would only sell their barley for "a length of white stuff!" They might as well have asked for the moon—there was nothing white in our luggage except a torn mosquito net—so the horses went hungry. That night there was rain for the first time since we began our Abyssinian trek. A magnificent, stormy sunset brought us out of our tents to watch the sky dissolve in flames, and, a few minutes later, the clouds raced up and emptied themselves over us. Out went the fires, and into the nearest tent ran everyone, bundling odd belongings in front of them, so that when I looked for a map in its

usual wall-pocket, I found a pot of honey, and Jones says he had the only bag of sugar for a pillow.

The rain brought warmth, so that we got up at five without shivering, and it laid the surface dust, though it was not sufficient to close the great cracks which split the grassland into hummocks. We rode ahead of the caravan for seven and a half miles till the sapphire blue to the northeast swung across the track, resolving into a mighty gorge, walled with precipices, its floor broken by towers of rock and by slopes to which clung cactus, red lily beds and villages. Downwards we went, till the valley, narrow, thickly shrubbed, lay below us, as it were in the bowels of an earth rent open and propped apart by palisades of stone. The view was marvellous, and Jones plied his cinema while the caravan descended painfully, by twisting steps and ledges, till it was lost altogether under the pinnacle on which we stood. On one side, thatched houses clambered between green thickets, with here and there a church like a diamond in a velvet case. Beyond, the river slipped into infinity between the narrowing cliffs. On the other side, across open spaces starred with tents, for Debra Libanos is the Jerusalem of Abyssinia and a place of pilgrimage, were forest trees and the dome of Tekla Haimanot, all shadowed by a crag which might have been the altar of some ancient god, titanic and primeval.

"It's gorgeous!" I said aloud, and a deprecating voice behind me murmured, "Yes, lady."

It was Hassen, more wizened and less comprehensive than usual. Before I could ask any questions he involved himself in the most complicated story in which

two roads, a wrong turning, riding till nightfall and no food, figured amidst much irrelevance.

"Couldn't you have asked the way?" I protested when his sentences grew as confused as his explanations, and then—at last—the mystery was explained. Our interpreter could only speak Galla, a language more foreign to the north than Arabic. Of Amharic he understood only a few words and, if those were as curious as his English, they must have most successfully disguised his meaning. Resigned, I accepted the inevitable, and eventually, in spite of hopelessly muddled three-cornered conversations, whenever Gabra Gorgis was too busy to translate direct from Arabic, we found there was something endearing about Hassen. He was so amazingly futile, and his mind was like a bundle of loose wool, but he always tried so desperately hard, with such funny results!

While our tents were being pitched on the edge of a thorn grove, with rocks towering above, I rode between the boulders to find Touma Lishan, chief priest of Debra Libanos, to whom the Itchegue had given me a letter. The larger *tukels* had the most fascinating little gate-houses with peaked roofs. Through one of these I passed into a yard full of servants and priests, the latter in cloaks made of hide, often very tattered, and turbans that looked like brimless top hats, either black or white. My letter gained me admittance to a shed made of cane, where a court of justice was being held, the judges huddled against the wall in their black wool-en capes, the witnesses standing up and, apparently, all talking together. After a few minutes, I was beckoned further into the maze of little palisaded courts, through

two or three huts which served as archways or ante-rooms, into a *tukel* hung with leather.

From a pile of skins in front of a curtain which hid the hide-covered couch, Touma Lishan rose to meet me. I was told that he was fifty-two and, disregarding the canons of his church, celibate. He looked thirty-five and, trim, polished, with narrow eyes and forehead, appeared more courtier than priest. We conversed through a *zabanier* who knew Arabic and, with the Itchegue's commands before him, he agreed, reluctantly I thought, to let us cinema the churches and the holy spring, whose water is said to cure most mortal ills. Back I went, with a spearman, accompanied by a tame sheep, running before me. Whenever his pet grew bored with the race and stopped to browse, my guide turned round and baaed to the instantly responsive animal.

I found Jones photographing a mending-party of *nagadis*, who were plying needle, awl and string with considerable skill and, as it was still only ten a. m., I insisted on immediate exploration of Debra Libanos. The village is not on the floor of the valley, but on a sloping shelf half-way up the southern cliff, and it is entirely inhabited by priests with their families and dependents, their religious schools, communal stores and kitchens, and by a varying temporary population of pilgrims or mourners come to bury their dead in blessed ground. There are thirty-five churches in the district, of which the largest is the octagonal domed Tekla Haimanot, but, when I tried to find out the number of priests who belonged to them, the figures varied from 1,200 to 3,000. A nice old man, shrivelled till he looked like a gourd, assured me there were half a million, but Gabra Gorgis

explained that, in Abyssinia, 10,000 is counted as a million.

The churches are embowered in olive groves, reminiscent of the real Jerusalem. The trees are sacred, and no twig must be broken, so the stony paths dive in and out among them through an undergrowth of flowering shrubs. The centre of the village is taken up by two large tin-roofed sheds in which women are not allowed, so Jones brought me a description of these monkish larders, granaries, bakehouses, breweries. They feed 700 daily, and he watched bread mixed in troughs made out of tree trunks, stacks of berberi pounded till everyone in the vicinity sneezed themselves out of it, and broad beans crushed with shimbura seeds.

Towards evening, when the air was sweet with incense, and vibrant like a hive with the chanting which came from every hut, a procession of slaves brought us meat, dried beans for the horses, and piles of *anjera*, while dwarf haystacks with donkeys' heads sticking out of the middle, trotted up and deposited themselves in front of our tents. All these presents were the produce of church lands, tilled, like those of the crown, by gabars, or serfs, who are entitled to a percentage of the stock they raise or corn they grow.

As the last bearer of gifts departed, bowing to the ground, a dirge drifted down among the rocks and, silhouetted far up on the cliff, came a funeral procession. The corpse, wrapped in a clean *chamma*, was carried by four men on a native bed, and the spearman, who, with his tame sheep, had attached himself to us, told me that the man had probably been dead only three or four hours.

"The country people do not like corpses," he said, "and they will never look on the face of one. It is covered before the last breath goes out of the body, and buried swiftly in a hole just deep enough to keep the jackals away."

We had passed many peasant graves heaped with stones, into which was stuck a cane bearing a fragment of hide, perhaps to frighten away beasts, or as some sort of charm, and they were always on high ground, generally by the roadside. But, in holy Debra Libanos, a dead priest lies for a few hours before the altar, and a layman in the place where he has worshipped, while the congregation, priests, monks, servants, kiss him on the forehead or the feet, and wish him good-bye.

There is a legend that St. Matthew visited Abyssinia in A.D. 30, but history ascribes the conversion of Ethiopia from Judaism to Christianity to Frumentius, who was consecrated as first bishop of Axum by Athanasius in the middle of the fourth century. A hundred years later the church adopted the monophysite form to which it has always clung in spite of the condemnation of the Council of Chalcedon. So long and decided a religious history has been commemorated in unnumbered manuscripts, the most important of which, with the histories of many hundred saints, and the chronicles of the ancient Ethiopian kings before and after the time of Queen Maqueda of Sheba, were kept at Debra Libanos. Unfortunately, many of these priceless manuscripts were destroyed in the Moslem and Galla invasion of the 16th century, and others were among the loot of Lord Napier's expedition to Magdala. One famous copy of the Kebra Negast "glory of the Kings", taken

from King Theodore's college, was returned to Debra Libanos after it had been treasured for years in the British Museum, just as the crown of Theodore, captured by the same expedition, was King George's parting gift to Ras Tafari, after the Regent's recent visit to England. In spite of the value and interest of the manuscripts still in Debra Libanos, there are no definite libraries. Each church possesses its own religious and historical records and, if you visit the chief priest's hut, you may find illumined vellum reposing on a sheepskin mat, or ancient, tattered volumes on the mud floor.

The village records often occupy any blank spaces between the psalms, and important political or historical events decorate the margins of religious works. Genealogies, as a rule, are considered so important that the Abyssinian will not trust them to the writing he instinctively distrusts. They are learned by heart, and handed on from father to son as a hereditary trust, and the first, sometimes the only, thing a small boy learns is the series of his ancestors, his connections to the last most distant degree.

The day we arrived at Debra Libanos was one of the innumerable fasts of the Abyssinian church, so most of our caravan sat mournfully under the trees growing visibly thinner. In the afternoon it began to rain and, towards evening, there was a downpour.

With the help of a soldering iron and a smoky lamp, Jones had reduced his tent to an excellent imitation of a coal pit, so the saddles were pushed under my bed and the film cases piled beside it. While I was wondering where I could put my legs, a tragic voice remarked: "If the lady does not have dinner now, there will be

nothing left but water," so a heaped dish of macaroni and some eggs were placed on top of the tins and a coffee pot balanced on my notebooks. I had just folded myself into the space that was left, when Gabra Gorgis hurried up.

"Great people are coming to see you," he announced in a stage whisper. "You must come out."

I had lent my mackintosh to Balaina, my boots were buried somewhere under the Eiffel-tower of baggage, and there were enormous holes in my stockings. All I could do was to put on my hat, since, for some occult reason, a European woman without a hat is regarded as an object of suspicion, and go out into the rain to welcome the dim, muffled shapes, of which there seemed to be an enormous quantity.

"Can they come into your tent?" I called to Jones.

A blackened countenance was thrust between the canvas.

"For the Lord's sake, don't let them. I've taken the camera to pieces."

In despair, I beckoned the chief priest to a seat on my bed. His henchman perched in the macaroni. The rest clustered round the door, and I saw a confused background of jars, baskets and dishes. It was the former that galvanized me into speech—action was impossible in the compressed space.

"Is that *tedj*?" I demanded.

Touma Lishan replied: "It is very nice that I bring you, but you gave me such short notice—just a few eggs——" here about fifty were emptied into my lap. "A chicken or two, some bread and beer."

Fervently I thanked him for his generosity and, still

more fervently, I implored him to excuse us accepting the *tedj*. I drew a moving picture of Omar's death and Hassen's disappearance, but the chief priest looked troubled.

"I have brought you so little," he said. "If there had been more time, I would have fetched a bull. What would the people say if I took back the small things I have given?"

With a forced smile, I bowed before the inevitable.

"We are grateful and thankful," I murmured, and then, fiercely, to the escort, "Put it all in here—every jar!"

Sadly they obeyed and, to Touma Lishan's amazement, he had to make room on the bed for half a dozen pots with bunches of green leaves stuck in the necks. I imagine he pictured Jones and me indulging in an orgy of drink, the gallons of mead dwindling by our unaided efforts as the dawn approached.

"There is *anjera*, too," he suggested and, as the rain was rapidly reducing platters and bread to pulp, this, too, was thrust in upon us, and followed by a bundle of hens.

"Do you want everything inside?" expostulated Gabra Gorgis. "There is a sheep——"

Before I could prevent it the curly horns of a vigorously protesting ram were pushed through the curtain.

"No, no—for heaven's sake no!" I cried, probably in English, but I could not move because of the mass of eggs on my knees. At this moment the fowls created a diversion by upsetting the coffee pot and squawking so vigorously amidst the hot liquid, that the henchman of

the chief priest came to the rescue with a dive that plastered the back of his cape with macaroni.

"Now it only needs the lamp to go out——" I thought as plates were swept to the floor and an egg broke over my pajamas, rolled into pink inconspicuousness in a corner. Flushed and triumphant, the deacon showed a muddle of flapping wings, beaks and loose feathers.

"I think I have got them all," he said.

"Thank you so much. I am so grateful and appreciative and obliged," I repeated, parrot-like.

Some time afterwards, when our visitors had departed but the storm was still with us, Jones and I surveyed the remnants of what should have been our dinner.

"I think it was too dark for them to see all the damage," I said hopefully.

"Uh! Will you have some macaroni and rain, or a squashed egg with mud purée?"

"There are some biscuits under my bed, I think. Take care—between the saddles."

Gingerly, Jones bent and fumbled.

"I've got them. No, it's a boot. Good Lord, why do you keep your sponge here—ugh, it's wet!"

It *was* wet, and it uttered a loud crow as it flapped against my legs.

"He evidently hadn't got them all," I remarked with resignation.

Still later, when we hoped the camp was asleep, Jones crept out with conspiratorial caution and upset each flagon and jar, so that our reputation as hard-headed drinkers must have been amazing when slaves fetched the empty receptacles in the morning.

Up until midnight the psalms of David echoed from

the slopes above us, and, through the cotton-wool with which, sleepless, I had stuffed my ears, it seemed as if each voice tried to chant louder and faster than the rest.

The same competing choirs woke us in the morning. The rain had given place to mist, and after speeding a depressed and dripping caravan, we had to wait for stray gleams of light to photograph the priests of Tekla Haimanot. The domed church is surrounded by eucalyptus, from under which beggars nasally demanded alms in the name of Mary. The octagonal verandah was thronged with priests, leaning on their prayer sticks, and a crowd of turbans eddied in the great courtyard. Incense blurred the portals, where censers swung drowsily to the rhythm of a mass. Suddenly the great doors opened, curtains were flung apart and, under the poppy red and anemone purple umbrellas, a gorgeous procession emerged. Once again we saw the mighty crosses, gold and silver, the embroidered cloaks, jeweled and fringed, the vestments of velvet and brocade, all the splendid pageantry of the church militant and triumphant.

While Jones turned his many handles between anxious glances skywards, I went into the church and was shown frescoes of the Empress, Ras Tafari and Ras Kassa, Governor of Salali province, attended by angels with wings starred and striped like the American flag. The ancient saint, Tekla Haimanot appeared on every wall, standing on one leg, the other lying on the ground in front of it, for legend says that, after forty years of prayer, during which he always stood in the same place, one leg was so tired that it broke and either fell off or had to be cut off. His other leg was miracu-

lously strengthened so that he suffered no inconvenience at the loss of its fellow, and was able to continue his standing prayers.

As we rode away from Debra Libanos, the mist swirled up the gorge after us, till the crags were wrapped in cotton-wool, and the river, which is one of the tributaries of the Abbai or Blue Nile, lost altogether. As soon as we reached the tableland, it looked as if, behind us, through a colossal gash, the smoke of Pluto's fires belched forth from the heart of the earth. We crossed the Goura, whose banks were red with lilies and, under cold, clouded skies, rode fast by little huddled villages, and grasslands thick with stones, to Fiche, the capital of Salali.

The village is scattered over the crest of an oblong hill, its two ends crowned, one by a thatched church, the other by the house, or rather collection of houses, of Ras Kassa. We camped on the opposite side of a declivity, from where we had an excellent view of the town and townsfolk. Very soon the usual procession arrived, bearing every form of produce, and pushing or pulling unwilling live stock, but Ras Kassa's hospitality was prodigious, for he sent humped oxen sufficient to feed an army, and everything else in proportion. When we went to thank him for his generosity—one of his gifts, a young bull, was at that moment trampling everything that attracted its attention, while frantic *magadis* danced round it at a safe but helpless distance,—we found a hundred soldiers drawn up at his gates to receive us. Between a double line of rifles, horsemen closed round us and, with flags fluttering from a score of lances, we were led through yard after yard

to the central enclosure. There is always a curious contrast between the simplicity of these feudal chiefs' houses and the number of their guards and retainers. There must have been at least five or six hundred riflemen in the Gibbe at Fiche. Every wall was lined with them, every court thronged, yet the halls through which we approached the great man were high thatched sheds, carpeted with grass and partitioned by muslin curtains, which were drawn back in front of us, one after another, by white-robed chamberlains. After quite a long walk, we found the Ras seated in a carpeted balcony, shut in with red and white hangings, which were pierced by one tiny window. Through this, I suspected him, since binoculars lay beside him, of watching our camp on the opposite slope.

Ras Kassa was one of the representatives of Abyssinia at the coronation of King George, and he is both intelligent and broad-minded. I liked talking to him, even through the medium of a secretary who spoke French, and I liked watching the play of expression on his clean-shaven, bold, rather square face. He ought to be a fighter and a leader of men, and his palace was rightly full, not of slaves, but of warriors. He spoke much less than most Abyssinians, and to the point. He only smiled once, when he said to me, "You ride like a man, you walk like one, I expected you to look like one after all I've heard of you. How is it that you don't?"

So the binoculars had been used!

CHAPTER XI.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE BLUE NILE.

WHILE we were breaking camp next morning and loading the mules, we saw white figures hurrying up the opposite hillside. Groups of riders disappeared within the Gibbe's walls, scores of riflemen ran after them.

"Do you think all this movement is in our honor?" I asked Jones, who was patiently explaining to the *zabaniers* that it is a mistake to roll up a wet tent and try to force it into a sack with a lamp still hanging inside it. I was not nearly so amiable when I discovered that my only straw hat, which I was keeping for a triumphal entry into Asmara, had been treated in the same way. Unfortunately, it offered less resistance than the lamp, so when it was rescued from a neatly roped and very flat sack, all that was left was some bent wire with a few shreds attached to it. In a very bad humor I rode up to the town with Jones, who, as soon as he saw the pageant which awaited us, was full of ingenious suggestions.

"They must have emptied the whole province during the night!" he ejaculated as some thousand soldiers, silhouetted on the skyline, saluted us, and forming into treble line escorted us to the gates.

"You'll have to get off and talk to those fellows in lions' skins—by Jove they're gorgeous—then you can

mount again and gallop up the hill with all of them behind you. It'll make a splendid picture."

"Thank you," I said, as the grey shied at the nearest barbaric figure. "Do you really imagine I'm going to provide an example of how not to mount a big-maned stallion with the devil of a temper and girths three inches too long? I generally have to hop round for five minutes uttering fervent prayers."

Jones sighed. "Couldn't you wedge him between some of these spears,"

"One of us would probably be wedged on top of them," I retorted.

The market-place was a solid mass of rifles and, through them and a forest of red and yellow pennons, we rode up to the double doors. Here chamberlains in amethyst silk robes and elegant *chammas*, received us, bowing over their wands. Once again we traversed the grass-carpeted halls, but this time the inner court was blazing with color. The warriors of Salali had come out in the full panoply of war, and war as they understood it, a spectacle magnificent, savage and full of glory. There were dyed sheepskin capes that put the rainbow to shame, collars and head-dresses of lion's mane, standing up in great tawny ruffs. There were curved swords in scabbards of velvet or wrought gold, studded with jewels; shields of blazoned hide, spears gleaming above a flare of scarlet, orange and violet, and casques that were half helmet, half crown. The senior officers wore mantles of smooth lionskin embossed with plaques of silver and gold. Other stately personages, with gemmed cartridge belts and huge swords swinging at their sides, were robed in violet silk, solidly

embroidered, curious tippets cut into many long points, made of fur, leather or gold-studded velvet. Against this splendid background, Ras Kassa stood out, a still figure in crimson and gold, his mantle so thickly embroidered that it looked like metal, and the sun turned it molten, striking fire from every whorl and thread. Jones told me he blinked as he manipulated his handles, but I wanted a hundred eyes, all lidless, to study each gorgeous detail. All too soon we had taken leave of our host, thanked him for the well-stocked farm, most of which, as it was Friday and a fast, when no meat could be eaten or animal killed, now followed our caravan, and soon found ourselves back in the great square between two walls of rifles.

"The Ras is sending a guide with you, who will provide all you want on the way," said a chamberlain. "Travel with safety. In four days you will be at Debra Markos."

This was not at all the idea of the guide, an officer, one Feterari Bazab, who rode with a mounted escort around him and two boys running behind carrying his rifle and shield in striped silk bags. Long before noon he urged us to camp."

"There is good grass here. If you go further, you will find neither water nor villages!"

Politely, but with the utmost firmness, I insisted on the necessity for an eight hours' march and, with short intervals, the argument continued all day.

"My mule is tired. Had I known, I would have brought three."

I offered the splendid animal given me by Dejezmatch Asafa at Ankober.

"But the men also are tired. They are not used to such journeys."

With compliments and raillery I countered every objection, to meet with new ones, each more remarkable than the last.

"The mules will die. Rain will come. The river Abbai will be in flood. The horses cannot swim it. There are beasts in it like sharks (crocodiles) which will eat their legs."

All this with a flashing smile, for Bazab was decorative in a bold, big-featured way.

As the afternoon waned I pointed out the clustered *tukels* on every succeeding down.

"I thought you said there were no more villages." But our guide was unabashed. The Abyssinian seems to me to tell lies with a sort of naïve hopefulness, and if they are not believed, he accepts the situation with a shrug and thinks out other more elaborate and impossible prevarications. So, having assured us that short of killing all our transport, including the exhausted *nagadis*, we could not possibly reach Debra Markos under a week, Bazab, when he saw that his eloquence was water on a duck's back, whipped up his sturdy mule, smiled cheerfully and remarked: "We Abyssinians do not like hurrying. We want to eat, drink and talk, and our women are tired in half an hour. You Europeans are different—you think of nothing but work. How old are you?"

Fiche gave way to Abote, an unending district full of nameless villages, and, at last dismounting, we climbed down from the plateau by twisting, boulder-heaped paths. A valley unfolded before us with the

ridge of Jerso as a barricade to the north, its last rocks shaped like a fort, on the edge of the gorge which, under many names, had run parallel with our route from Debra Libanos.

"That is Adabai, and in one hour we shall reach my own property," said Bazab, forgetful of his earlier discouragement. Laughing he ran into a wayside farm.

"Since you will not eat the bull," he spoke as if it were a snipe or other trifle, scarcely a meal, "I will fetch you milk."

He came out waving a gourd. "You can never get full with milk, so you will walk faster than ever tomorrow, and I shall change my mule at each house we pass."

It may be added that, when we camped, about four, at the junction of Abote and Jerso, the "exhausted" horses with a gay following of baggage animals, bucked through a barley field, and then ran away, with such determination that a whole village had to be conscripted to look for them.

The last clouds had disappeared when we started up Jerso ridge and, though it was only half-past six, the sun was hot on our backs.

"It's going to be fierce later on," said Jones, and his horse apparently agreed, for it tried to lie down several times. When we reached a tableland, barren, and burned the yellow of Italian plaster, we sat down under the only tree to wait for the caravan.

"If you walk till night, you will not reach the Abbai," began the *Feterari* and, seeing us unconvinced, he counted up on his fingers the pests of the river bed. "You cannot camp beside the water. There are flies,

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mosquitoes, snakes, crocodiles, large animals like bulls and very fierce."

He paused either for lack of breath or imagination.

"Do you think he means the gentle hippopotamus?"

I asked the interpreter, but Jones, who was very hot and rather bored, interrupted:

"Tell him the lady likes snakes. She has one fourteen feet long in her drawing room."

I gasped as Hassen solemnly translated the fable to our crestfallen guide.

"But crocodiles," he murmured, feeling that his snakes had fallen rather flat.

Not to be outdone, I assured him that Jones kept a tame alligator in his backyard. The *Feterari* looked from one to the other in amazement. Perhaps he decided that against such experienced liars he had no chance.

"My crocodile has eaten three men," said Jones firmly. Bazab's mouth remained wide open.

"Oh, my snake is very tame—it never bites anyone, and it only eats milk." I thought it time to reassure him, but we heard no more of the wild animals of Abbai. A meek and wondering *Feterari* rode beside us till, as the dotted groups of *tukels* thickened into a village on the far, flat horizon, he asked permission to go in front of us and dress.

"What on earth does he mean?" asked Jones frustrating a determined effort to roll on the part of the chestnut.

We found out an hour or two later when, cantering after the caravan, we came upon a mass of riflemen and spearmen posed stiffly by the side of the track. In

front was a chair covered with carpets and, beside it, a magnificent apparition in a Trilby felt hat and a mantle of sheepskin cut into many tails, over a gentian-blue robe clasped with gold and gems. While Jones rushed for the cinema, I felt the least I could do was to dismount and gravely shake hands with this new aspect of the *Feterari* Bazab. Seriously, with a child's delight in dressing up, he showed me the row of mules and horses all jingling with heavy silver ornaments, and draped to their heels in scarlet. Each magnificent saddle-cloth was whisked off at our approach, but, smiling with delight, Bazab waved them all away till a bay stallion loaded with metal and silk was brought up. This he mounted and, gesturing to me to follow, pranced away, the horse caracolling with arched neck and foam-flecked nostrils, the rider encouraging him, wholeheartedly happy, all such puzzles as crocodiles and snakes forgotten. There was nothing to do but to follow and, since everyone seemed to have produced some sort of horse or mule, the rush of riders soon swept into a headlong gallop, while the men-at-arms tore after us yelling encouragement.

I was so occupied keeping my horse out of cracks and holes, that I did not realize where we were going till after a final spurt between tree-trunks, we drew up at a lych gate. It really was a lych gate, thatched and peaked, and it led into a round enclosure, beautiful with forest trees, and sweet-scented with gum and yew. The turf was smooth and green, and within the circle of mud wall with its quaint straw eaves, was an old quaint church. With its thatched roof, dark beamed corridors and weather-stained, sun-blackened walls, it had an air

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of ancient peace, a touch of something primitive as if it were a part of the earth from which its walls were made, and to which it inevitably belonged. A very old priest white-bearded, wise and simple, blessed me.

"I do not know your land, but may God take you back to it with safety."

Some boy deacons in faded silks held up square silver crosses as Bazab took my hand and led me into the dim, murky passages, where panels and pillars were solid tree-trunks and the floors were cane-matted and strewn with grass.

"Take off your hat," he said, "and make a salaam to Mary."

I thought it was easier to obey than to explain the ways of Europe, so, bare-headed, we proceeded round the outer walls of the tabernacle, bowing deeply before the figure of each martyred saint. The Abyssinians kissed the ground whenever "Mariam" or "The Father" were pictured, but I did not look too closely, for the frescoes were horribly realistic and, amidst much blood, hacked-off limbs and tortures, they portrayed—to the last gruesome detail—the agonies of every old-time confessor and disciple.

I noticed that only a few boys and some old men had followed us into the church. The crowd remained outside, as it does during festivals and services, and I learned later that no one is supposed to enter a church, unless he or she has been chaste for twenty-four hours.

The sunshine glancing between branches, and the pride of priests and headmen in "the house of all Christians", their treasured possession, brought back the spell. There were no beggars, and even the Abyssinian voices

were stilled by the charm, which made me look back from each low doorway to catch another glimpse of the brown roofs and brown walls with whose simplicity the vestments of the censer bearers, darned and sun-bleached, the faded saffron of the priests, were tenderly in keeping.

Very soon, of course, the spell was broken, for, amidst a storm of protest and explanation, so piercing that it echoed on one's ear drums, Gabra Gorgis, limbs, reins a bundle of hens, loose stirrups, and an armful of fag-gots, all moving together, broke into our midst, shouting that the caravan was being held up at Kandi market, by an officious customs-control who wanted to see my passport. Shriller than ever with wrath, the *Feterari* flung himself on to a horse and galloped off in a whirl of loosely attached limbs and garments. I followed to prevent more muddle than was necessary. Into the middle of a throng of merchants vociferously busy with the sale of vigorous and self-willed live stock, we precipitated ourselves, and, in a second, customs officials, caravan, country-women, their garments bulging with produce, beggars, soldiers and priests were inextricably confused. Wood-cutters quailed under the misdirected fury of Bazab. His cane fell on the backs of blameless shepherds. On a stream of invective our mules were driven in every direction but the right one, while we drifted helplessly with the tide, the cameras bobbing up and down as hands pushed or pulled. It took a long time to traverse the few hundred yards to the cliff, which drops by stages of rock and shrub over four thousand feet to the Abbai river, but, at last, with heads and lungs bursting from the final vocal struggle, we attained it.

For the rest of the afternoon we scrambled downwards, by the usual boulder cascades, between cunning trees which hid their thorns amidst a mass of bloom. I wanted to camp by the river, so that we might start the terrible climb to Gojam in the dawn coolness, but the old protests were put forward. There was no water further on, no grass for the mules, if we walked till nightfall we should not reach the river bed. When I countered the last by insisting that, since we could not climb five thousand feet under a mid-day sun, we must certainly make further progress before camping, the river came mysteriously nearer.

"It is but an hour," said Gabra Gorgis. "I was wrong."

It was very hot, with a glare reflected from the rocks, and the view was purple-blue and gorgeous with the chasm misty below us and the cliffs of Gojam heaped in tumultuous shadows beyond.

"Very well. Put the tents on the ledge," I agreed, hypnotized by the babel, for some fifty soldiers of the *Feterari* still lingered with us, and a good-looking boy with eyelashes an inch long, Grazmatch Balai, headed a large party sent to escort us across his border by Ras Heilu, the semi-independent chief of Gojam. It was agreed that we should start very early.

"But not before it is light," insisted Balai, "for there are thieves by the river."

"Snakes, crocodiles, brigands," said Jones. "I wonder what we shall be told next!"

A few minutes later one of Ras Kassa's soldiers was bitten as he went carelessly through long grass. There was pandemonium. The man would die. It was a viper.

The poison was instantaneous. The man, in fact, was almost dead! Trying to remember the correct treatment for snake-bite, I rushed for my medicine chest, hatless, ran back with it, had the cautery out in a minute, flung myself down beside the sufferer and was told politely if diffusely that he would rather bear those evils that he had than fly to others that he knew not of! He did not die. I expect he was bitten by one of the mosquitoes which, in the Abbai gorge, have the tenacity of bulldogs, or perhaps there were some thorns among the grass!

As we crept slowly downwards next morning, the cliffs seemed to shut in above us and, wherever they split into pinnacles, a group of figures were to be seen high-perched like hawks, with the sun glinting on sword and rifle-barrel. We learned there really had been several ambushes lately, and only large caravans attempted the route. This added to the confusion on the narrow track, for, not twenty but a hundred mules laden with hides, honey and grain barged up or down the mist impassable slabs and steps, where the path seemed to break off with a gasp at its own audacity. There was one horrible moment when, our mules wedged between broken trunks and boulders, a tide of over-burdened donkeys surged on to them, was repulsed by the weight of our luggage, and broke into staggering atoms, some of which were swept over the cliff. Drivers hurled themselves to the rescue, lean figures in half-long mantles of sheepskin opening at one side over rude sinewy flesh; but one or two of the animals went somersaulting down to crash on some projecting spur.

The crossing of the river was rather fun. Deter-

mined to get some pictures which would show the caravan wallowing saddle-high amidst the crowds of naked spearmen who ward off the crocodiles by a great deal of splashing, churning the water with spears reversed, Jones and I waded in, reckless that we had but one pair of boots apiece. There were cries from the bank where the caravan was assembling a hundred strong, prepared to enter the water in a wedge, mules in the center, but we plunged on till the current stopped us, and a spearman ran in to help hold the camera stand. I left him, forgetful of the crocodiles, staring at Jones' magic instrument, but, when, with the baggage sagging into the flood, we crawled slowly towards the Gojam bank, the escort was active, in spite of being more than waist-deep. With shouts and leaps they sought to frighten away the beasts they insisted lay waiting for the solitary or unwary, and, half-way across, when I had just tucked my legs and saddle-bags into a heap on the mule's quarters, a discharge of musketry echoed up the gorge. The mane saved me from falling off and, gingerly peering round, I found the *Grazmatch* and some of his soldiers firing skywards, rifles held above their heads.

"The noise frightens away the sharks," explained Hassen. The next moment, with a scream, a man slipped full length into the water at my side. Paralyzed, I merely stared at the place where he had been, but his companions redoubled both outcry and gymnastic efforts, till the man came up again smiling.

"He slipped on a rock and cut his foot and he thought it was a shark. God be praised!"

A touch of humor was added to the incident by the

arrival at this moment of a water procession carrying Ras Heilu's latest purchase—a motor-car in bits. With one accord the porters dropped tires and hood in the water and tried to sit on them!

Progress up the unending cliffs of Gojam was slow. The soles of my boots parted gently, and the leg of one cracked neatly all the way up the back. It was a justifiable protest, since they dated from 1911, and had ridden through most countries and a large number of waters, but it made me nearly as gloomy as the *zabaniers* who began their usual "let us camp" grumble long before there was any place flat enough to pitch a plate, let alone a tent! The Abbai's considerable width—it is the upper part of the Blue Nile—dwindled into an oiled silk ribbon and ledge after close-cropped ledge shelved upwards, with villages apparently pinned on to each vantage point by the bristles of their hedges. At last we reached the tableland, corresponding to the southern stretch of Jerso, and started briskly across it, determined to reach Debra Markos on the fourth day from Fiche. Followed an outcry to which we paid no attention, so the guides dropped behind.

"We will walk no further. We are tired. There is no water till the river (Bechat), a day's march away."

I called their bluff at once.

"Thank you so much," I said. "The road is quite clear, so you must not think of overtiring yourselves."

They looked blank, as I hurried on with Jones, who always backed me up nobly when we "raised" the Abyssinian, a very poor player of mental poker! Within ten minutes, they were at our heels, suddenly remember-

ing a succession of forgotten water-holes. When the last of these was passed and the "next morning" story began again, the lie for once recoiled for, having watered our animals earlier, we camped on a barren stretch, near no hospitable village, and were blissfully deaf to the plea that, after all, there was a stream (and no doubt some huts which brewed *talla*) in the near vicinity.

It rained that night. When we found the poles of the servants' tents had been thrown away as they were a nuisance to carry, and the *zabamiers* had kept nothing from the feast—a huge bull and a hundred and thirty loaves—supplied by the last headman, we decided that trekking in Abyssinia is spoiled by the fecklessness of the caravan, who will not look after their own comfort, but expect manna and nectar to drop into their mouths "if God wills", and by their inveterate laziness. Travel, if it is to be peaceful, must be limited to five or six hours a day, so Jones and I soon knew and tried, by going on ahead, to evade the surliness of what we called the two o'clock expression.

CHAPTER XII.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

THE day of our arrival at Debra Markos was a nightmare presentation of the results due to such evasion. Assured both by the map and by half a dozen guides that we were within about eighteen miles of Ras Heilu's capital, we started at seven o'clock, left the river and ravine of Bechat to the south, passed Enabi in the distance after two miles and were guided to "a short-cut" that took us through golden barley and equally sun-gilt grass, till we came to a ditch full of black mud. It was no bigger than any of the other pools of slime we had crossed, so, slipping from my horse, I probed my way through it, and was surprised to slip ankle-deep into the last puddle. I was scraping thick layers from my boots, mended by one of the *sabaniers* with yellow thread, when I heard yells from the *nagadis*, and a shout of warning from Jones. Turning, I saw the mud of the pool alive, caked into heaving shapes, which, black as ebony, except where a piece of luggage or a white mane stuck up, struggled, squirmed and sank deeper in response to the bog suction. Half the caravan had plunged in together, and, for a moment, it looked as if none of them would come out. Fortunately the deepest place was near our bank, and with the *nagadis*, slimed to the necks, pushing, dragging, holding their animals by main

force and their tails or noses above the mud, most of the beasts managed to writhe on to firm ground. The last three were perhaps more heavily loaded for, in spite of submerged struggles, they sank slowly till only their heads and chins were visible. The muleteers tore off the loads, but even then the animals lay helpless, and, after frantic efforts to raise them, during which the unfortunate *nagadis* wallowed nearly as deeply as their beasts, I suggested poles, having seen these used with good effect with camels in quicksands. The first one broke, but the second, a tent pole, was driven under a mule's body and six men levered the animal up while two others tugged at its mane and tail. After this the luggage was washed, though the muleteers were beyond the power of ablutions, and by noon we set off again, arguing, of course, as to distance.

"If you walk till night you will not get to Debra Markos."

"No, no, by five o'clock you will be in the town."

"If God is charitable it is but three hours from here," and at last, after we had left the grass lands with a stream running below each ridge, for thickets of table-top mimosa, "from the top of the next hill there is only one hour."

It was then four o'clock and we were tired, but the prospect of a long day's rest at Debra Markos tempted us, so we hurried up the slope, between bushes which flamed with yellow flowers, like sunshine caught in a net. Wild roses, roses of Sharon, clematis and heavy-scented jasmine edged the path. Through many rocky rivulets we splashed and at last, the hill top reached, we cried,

"Well, where's the town?" for sunset was near, and every Abyssinian hates the dark.

"Near! It is near. Look, from there you can see it."

With the *Grazmatch* leading, we urged our mounts to what we hoped was a final effort. Alas! Debra Markos district may have lain below us, but its villages and its trees crowned a hilltop several miles away.

The light was fading under a stormy day. Prudence counselled camp and a morning ride into the town, but distance is sometimes deceptive, and our bones ached for thirty-six hours' freedom from the saddle.

"The caravan is close behind us," said someone. "The *nagadis* must follow—they'll want to get in and they know they'll have nothing to do but eat and talk to-morrow," added Jones.

"Hum. It's the beginning of a forty-day fast," I returned, but we went on and darkness came suddenly as we struggled through plough, startling a host of plovers which shrieked a protest round our mules' ears.

"I must go ahead," said the *Grazmatch*, "or they will not let us into the town."

Imagining the boy tempted by a roof and a fire, I insisted on sticking to him, very literally, for, changing on to horses, we charged, nose to tail, through complete darkness, mile after mile, till, at seven, we entered the rough grass below Debra Markos.

"Here you can camp," said Balai. "There is water close by, and I will bring you eggs and milk."

Arrival in his own town had roused the eager hospitality which is the best of Abyssinia, and he dashed into the blackness, intent on plunder.

Hassen, who had staunchly followed, looked at me blankly. The stars had come out, but they were cloudy and the grass was drenched. I had nothing but the lightest mackintosh, and we stamped up and down, miserably, waiting for Jones and the *nagadi*. Neither came. An hour passed and the raw cold pierced us. Our teeth were frankly chattering when the *Grazmatch* reappeared, hugging a fowl.

"You must come into a house," he said. "There are plenty; you can have as many as you want."

"We must find the gentleman first," I insisted, and we began a futile search, sending such stray *zabaniers* as had out-distanced the caravan, back along the track, impressing perplexed townsfolk to search what appeared to us to be an unending combination of tussocks, molehills and waist-high grass, or cracks full of water. By nine I was numb and exhausted, for lunch at noon had consisted of sour milk and a few inches of bread. The *Grazmatch* urged me towards a hut, from which issued the smoke of a dung fire.

We pushed past some cows and a calf to the centre of a large can and mud *tukel*. Three dogs and a sheep were clustered round the ashes, where a woman was cooking something in half a gourd. A number of men and boys were crouching round the walls under some lights made of fat, stuck in clay posts. The air was heavy with dust, smoke, smell of oil, animals and unwashed humans, but it was warm. Shivering and wet, I was pushed on to a platform covered with matting. Something squawked as I put out a hand to steady myself. Apparently several hens and their well-grown families shared the couch, and a mass of dung cakes and

hay were piled behind it. A young man, owner of the house offered me milk, and very charmingly put everything he had at my disposal. Of course I must have the bed, he and his family would sleep elsewhere, he insisted, and I noticed there were several cane-partitioned spaces, but, from most of them, came bleats or animal scuffling. At this moment there was a rush in the doorway and, dramatically, Gabra Gorgis entered. He never could resist an emotional opportunity, and he always gesticulated according to its intensity. Followed by a cute and overwhelmed Balaina, our cook threw a bundle at my feet.

"Gone!" he said. "He has gone! He has sat down! All is with him. There is nothing, nothing! I took hold of a few things from my box—oil, coffee, biscuits—they are here." He precipitated himself on to the floor, and, in the midst of dust and mud, spread out miscellaneous articles of food.

"He has no thought. The mules were finished, dead. He sits! There is no tent, no bed. All is finished. Two hours from here. I galloped and I paid a man one real, which I took from the bag!"

It was too much. My bewildered brain refused to register the appalling fact. For I was so worried about Jones who could speak no word of either Arabic or Amharic, and whom, since Gabra Gorgis had not passed him on what I was assured was the *only* road, I now pictured frozen in one of the many streams, or straying into the next province.

"We must all go back and look," I began, conscious of my futility, but Gabra Gorgis thrust me back.

"I shall make eggs," he said. "The *kharwaga* is lost

—everything is lost. I will make an omelette.” He seemed to me to throw somebody else’s eggs into a borrowed dish and, at once, an omelette emerged. Perhaps there was an interval, but, just as the miracle, in a very dirty pan, was placed on my knees, Jones came in, rather injured and stiff with cold.

“Where on earth did you get to? I’ve been standing at the town gate for an hour.”

“I don’t think there is one,” I said meekly, as I pushed a hen out of my discarded hat.

“I tell you I’ve been waiting for ages. There were soldiers, and they brought me a chair. It’s the only gate in a huge wall.”

“Yes,” I murmured, conscious that neither gate nor wall encircled Debra Markos. “Won’t you have some omelette?”

We ate in silence, numbed by damp, weariness and the thought of the night before us.

“Shall we share this platform with the fowls,” I asked, a little cheered by the warmth, though the acrid smoke made my eyes water, “or would you like a cubby-hole with the family?” But Jones was intent on his adventures.

“It’s a mercy that the *Grazmatch* didn’t bring you right up to the town. They wouldn’t let me in—wanted me to pitch a tent outside, at least I heard a lot of talk about a dunquan (tent). I suppose they shut the gates at sunset like at Harrar.”

“Perhaps,” I agreed, wondering how soon the horses would be fed and sufficiently rested for me to go in search of the *nagadis*. It was obviously impossible to spend the night in the *tukel* which was now crowded to

suffocation, as the muleteers might linger comfortably on some hillside and we be summoned to face Ras Heilu and the morning light in a condition of incomparable dirt.

"How did you discover this house?" I asked Jones, while I studied the different stratas of mud on my breeches.

"The *Grazmatch* found me and sent me down here. I suppose he has a pass or something, for the soldiers let him in. There were troops of them—the place must be regularly fortified."

Later we discovered the groom had led Jones straight to the gate of the palace, where the embarrassed officials, polite, but bewildered by the unannounced advent of a stranger, had discussed the advisability of putting up a tent for this apparently homeless European who refused to understand that the Ras really could not be disturbed at this late hour. That night, however, Jones retired with a greasy leather pillow and a mule blanket, firmly determined that we had been banished to a suburb, and I was too tired to reiterate that we were a few yards from the market place.

I had dragged off my wet boots and wrapped my feet in the mackintosh, but, after ten minutes, I was so frozen by the wind from the open door—the fire was lost in a volume of smoke—that I stamped into the boots again, sympathetically helped by the half dozen people huddled beside me, and wrapped the paper-thin coat round my shoulders. Once again I lay down, my head on a sack of onions, but, after a few minutes, every limb began to prick, till it seemed as if my skin were on fire.

"This is nerves," I told myself sternly. "You're over-

tired—that's all," but the irritation increased till I thought I must have got some new sort of fever. Moreover, just under my ear—it seemed sometimes as if it were inside—were strange squeaks and scuffings. At last, all my flesh burning, my head throbbing, I got up and peered under the low, matted platform, repeating, "imagination, of course!" for there was not space enough for anything but fowls, and no self-respecting hen could achieve such noises. A mass of muffled figures were sitting motionless and silent, beside the ashes, and I wondered if Abyssinians ever slept. I don't think they do if there is anything to eat or to talk about! The master of the house saw my movement, and, smiling, inserted an arm under the laths and pulled out, one after another, several wriggling, furry shapes.

"What on earth are they," I gasped, wondering if my eyes as well as my prickling, flaming skin were deceiving me.

"Civets," he said in Amharic. "The fur makes oil." He looked as if he were going to squeeze immediate grease out of the ferret-like creatures, but I had seen my wrist in the light, and was staring at it, horrified. It looked like the raised map of a mountainous country, for there was not a pencil-point of skin that was not spotted, and bite was superimposed on bite.

"Jones!" I whispered, awed at the thought of what the rest of me must be like, "Are you asleep?"

"Asleep!" moaned a despairing voice. "I think I'm going mad!"

"No, you're not. It's all right, but for heaven's sake let's get out of this before we're eaten alive."

We stumbled over the animal and human bundles on

the floor. The damp wind stung us on the threshold, but it's cold was refreshing after the torment of that haunted couch.

"I'm going to fetch the *nagadi*," I said. "It's not eleven yet, and the horses have had some barley. Will you stay till I get back—I won't be more than four hours."

Jones had a thin leather waistcoat over his shirt, and he shivered as a gust of rain whipped us.

"I won't go back to that—there must be swarms of bugs, and all hungry! I thought it was my head—the sun, you know."

The *zabaniers* proved unexpectedly complacent, while Gabra Gorgis shouted directions, contradicted them, made stormy and gesticulative arrangements, abused those who carried them out, incoherent with delight at the idea of scoring off the muleteers. A glance at the horses showed there was no chance of their doing another twelve miles that night, so I resigned myself to a slower journey on mules. We started off, huddled down on the saddles, mutely miserable, while a couple of hurricane lamps danced in front of us.

I shall never forget that ride. The wind seemed to come from every side at once, and each gust was like a knife. The streams seemed to have multiplied sevenfold and widened into rivers. We were always splashing through ice-cold water, clambering up and down banks, staggering through mountainous plough. Once again we roused the plovers, and a flapping, shrilling cloud beat into our faces, scattering the mules in all directions. We found ourselves—and in two cases our seats!—and our way by the light of the lanterns and

plodded on again, so stiff that, when at last, unexpectedly, we rode into a tent, we could hardly get out of the saddles. We were much too cold for rage. Methodically I pulled out every peg, and, with the collapsing of the canvas, the muleteers crept out.

"Get the mules and load them," I said.

They blinked at me stupidly, but *sabaniers* and cook, even the *Grazmatch*, were already dragging in the animals who were so surprised that they forgot to kick. We did not trouble about the manner of loading, but plumped the nearest tin or box onto any beast available, and our determination must have quelled their obstinacy, for only one ran away—to fall immediately into a water-hole. The rest stood drooping, while we wrestled with pack-saddle and rope, aided as clumsily as possible by reluctant *nagadis*. When tents, flea-bags and suit-cases were loaded, and we were just going to start, leaving everything less necessary to the morning mercies of the muleteers, Jones, with a cry of ecstasy, pounced on a very dirty blanket.

"This is better than opening my roll in darkness," he said—one of the lamps with its bearer had fallen into a ditch, and neither could be induced to work any more.

I peered round in search of prey. A grimy grey heap indicated where one of the slaves had been asleep, comfortable and warm in his sheepskins, while we shivered in the open. In a moment the fur was round my shoulders, and the owner, still rich in a couple of blankets, decided to follow to see what became of it. With his aid, we adjusted the loads a dozen times on the endless march back. At a funeral pace we crawled, one step at a time, through pitch darkness, for the last star was

smothered in cloud. Rain spat at us. Grass flicked our faces as we blundered off the track. The mules sat down on hummocks and wriggled up again with saddles draped on their flanks. Gabra Gorgis fell into a stream with a box of biscuits, over whose loss he wailed like a banshee! Jones, blue and patchy, assured me between a crescendo of sneezes that he was not in the least cold. I stammered the cheering news that, since the last and unforeseen rivulet, which should not have been there, the *Grazmatch* was most uncertain of the way.

Even the Abyssinians were dumb, when, at half past three, in a storm, we wandered blindly into a bunch of trees, turned away from them and found ourselves amidst a mass of furrows and tussocks reminiscent of our first halting-place at Debra Markos.

"The palace must be there," suggested Balai, doubtfully, pointing to what the morning revealed as a market. "Let us put up the tents here. It is rather far from water, but—God be charitable, what is that!" It was only a mule which had splashed into a bog.

"I don't think we need worry about water," I said grimly.

Somehow, we put up the tents, pushed the flea-bags into them, and sent the servants to the shelter of the nearest hut.

What about the mules?"

"God will restrain them," said Hassen piously.

"I don't care whether they run to Addis Ababa—the exercise would warm them," I retorted, for the sight of Jones's face worried me.

"I've got some brandy somewhere," I said, as the tent shook under a blast of hail. "The pegs are giving"—I

put my head out reluctantly and found a group of riflemen huddled between the ropes.

"What are you doing? Go at once to a hut."

"There are robbers here," they murmured. "You have no rifles."

"Don't talk nonsense! Run!" I ordered. They did.

I closed the flaps with frozen fingers, found the brandy by the simple expedient of turning upside down the suit-case devoted to films, milk tablets, watches, binoculars, revolvers, destined for gifts. Silently Hassen, Jones and I took to drink!

"Now we can sleep, if the tents don't come down," I said, when a little warmth stole through us.

"We've got two hours, I suppose, before the first person comes to inquire how we are," remarked Jones, and went off with the interpreter.

I tried to take off my boots, but they seemed to be immutably welded onto my feet, so I gave up the struggle, forced three pairs of socks and stocking legs over them, systematically put on everything I could find, including a muffler wound round my hips and the many folds of the mosquito net swathed over my shoulders, and inserted myself, bulging, into my flea bag. Alas, it was rightly named, and, from the sounds that came from the continuous tent, I guessed Jones was as sleepless as myself. Till dawn I tossed and scratched.

The first light brought me out of the constrained misery of blankets, every inch of them alive with the starving insects we had brought from the *tukel*. Shivering, yet with skin raw and inflamed, I flung the bedding out of the tent and proceeded to the chase. It lasted for hours and all the retinue joined in it. Balaina

burrowed between canvas and jaeger linings. Gabra Gorgis examined mackintosh and boots, pouncing with ferocity on every speck amidst exclamations of "Oh, the poor lady! Oh, the sad work! Oh, the bad house!" Within closed tents Jones and I flicked, prodded, shook, and, (I hate to say it)—squashed, for there were hop-pety ones, and insidious atoms that pretended innocence, fat, pulpy ones, and crawlers, with a lot of legs. In the middle of the hunt a message came that Ras Heilu was waiting to receive us at the Gibbe!

I don't know how completely we represented the aftermath of a white night, but, clothed in the suits we treasured for great occasions, though horribly speckled, and without the strength of will to resist the maddening necessity of tearing at wrists and ankles, we came blinking into the sunshine and got our first glimpse of the town which had proved so illusive.

Debra Markos consists of some hundreds of huts plastered over a slope and dominated by the large walled domains of Ras Heilu, on whom the life of the town depends. The population of two or three thousand are all employed by the local government. They are soldiers, courtiers, officials with their followers, and the hewers of wood and drawers of water who serve their material needs. It is the most feudal town in Abyssinia, for Ras Heilu has complete control over every man, woman or child within its borders. He is a very rich man, even judged by European standards, and is said to be able to muster a fighting force of 40,000, but, like all these Ethiopian lords, he has nothing on which to spend his money. He can order a complete gold dinner service from England, an inlaid dining-table to seat

one hundred, or motors which are never delivered, but his chief expenditure is on the upkeep of his army and a prodigal hospitality. I don't suppose any of the great Rases could say how many men at arms they have. Their courts are thronged with hundreds of rifles. At the summons of mounted heralds thousands more stream into the town.

Like the army of the capital, these men are supplied with government rifles, but in some ways they are better off than the regular soldiers, for pay has been cut down since the days of Menelik, when it began at nine dollars a month. To-day the armies of the Empress are paid at a rate varying from five to thirteen dollars according to rank. They are given two coats and two pairs of trousers a year. Officers of any seniority, *Koyazmatch*, *Feterari*, *Dejezmatch*, are given grants of government land for life tenure or for the period of their service. On this, of course, they pay the usual taxes, which consist of a tithe of all grain raised and four beasts out of every hundred at the annual stock-taking, supplying "dergo," the food given to crown officials or any who travel with the Negus' writ, and contributing to arbitrary levies on such occasions as the Emperor may need money for war, the building of churches or the dowries of his family. The great Rases also grant land to their officials, but these have the right to live at their master's expense when in his capitol, and the ordinary soldiers receive all their clothes, five mule loads of grain (*taffi*) a month, and two or three dollars in pay. In the matter of food, therefore, they score over the government army, whose men have to provide their own rations except on Sundays and holy days, when

they are fed on raw meat and *tedj*. Such vast quantities of these are consumed that we saw 2000 bulls belonging to Ras Heilu fattening for the one Easter feast.

The life of such an Abyssinian chief seems to alternate between extreme simplicity as shown by house, furniture, and lack of all personal comfort, and lavish display in the way of travel, ceremonial clothes and arms, and the colossal banquets given to unnumbered gorged multitudes. This hospitality is extended to any stranger passing through the town and I learned that Ras Heilu employed one hundred women cooks, not counting the score of brewing-maids and the three dozen butchers who turned his herds into joints.

Another drain on a great man's purse is the continual baksheesh which flows in the most ill-considered ways. Life in Abyssinia is cheap. On two dollars a month a man can feed himself, and on five he can supply the needs of a family. Clothes also are inexpensive, for the common *chammas* cost two and a half to five dollars, trousers one dollar and shirts one dollar and a quarter. The only luxury available is drink, and four large jars of *talla* (ale) or one of *tedj* can be procured for a dollar.

In every town there are dull and sordid little houses where complaisant women will dance, play the lute, drink with and otherwise minister to the physical needs of man, but, except for such pleasures, money has little value. It cannot buy comfort. There is not enough work for the town and village population, so, though a man may earn eighteen dollars one month as a *zabanier* on trek or twenty-five dollars as a cook, he may be unable to find employment for the next six, and, having

probably spent all his wages in getting drunk, he borrows money from a neighbor at ten per cent. interest per month. The result is that three-quarters of the people are in debt and a good many of them turn thieves in order to get out of it, or live on baksheesh. Only a small proportion of this money is given for work, but it is poured out in other ways on a scale that would seem incredible in Europe.

The dollar as a tip has the value of sixpence, and when a Ras travels, sackfuls are scattered in every direction. The bearer of good news or of any gift expects a few reals and, if the present is from a chief, he will not be content without a dozen. If a Ras lends a horse, the groom who brings it returns with his hands full. When the Empress presents a court robe, the recipient has to reward the messenger at the rate of three or four pounds. In each district, or portion of it, a traveler of any importance is accompanied by a different local official, who will hint gently that he would like a revolver or a few hundred cartridges, while the numberless soldiers who accompany him, the servants, guides, slaves, porters, none of whom do anything but talk, expect an exorbitant amount for such lip service. I should think at least twenty casual but hopeful strangers told me the moving story of how they had killed a man and were being dunned for blood-money by his family, with the plea that I should produce one hundred dollars to free them from vengeance. Whenever a trumpeter attempted to shatter our ear-drums, he expected a sovereign for the feat and everything else was in proportion, so that the sums distributed by any Ras in quite unearned baksheesh must total a large portion of his income!

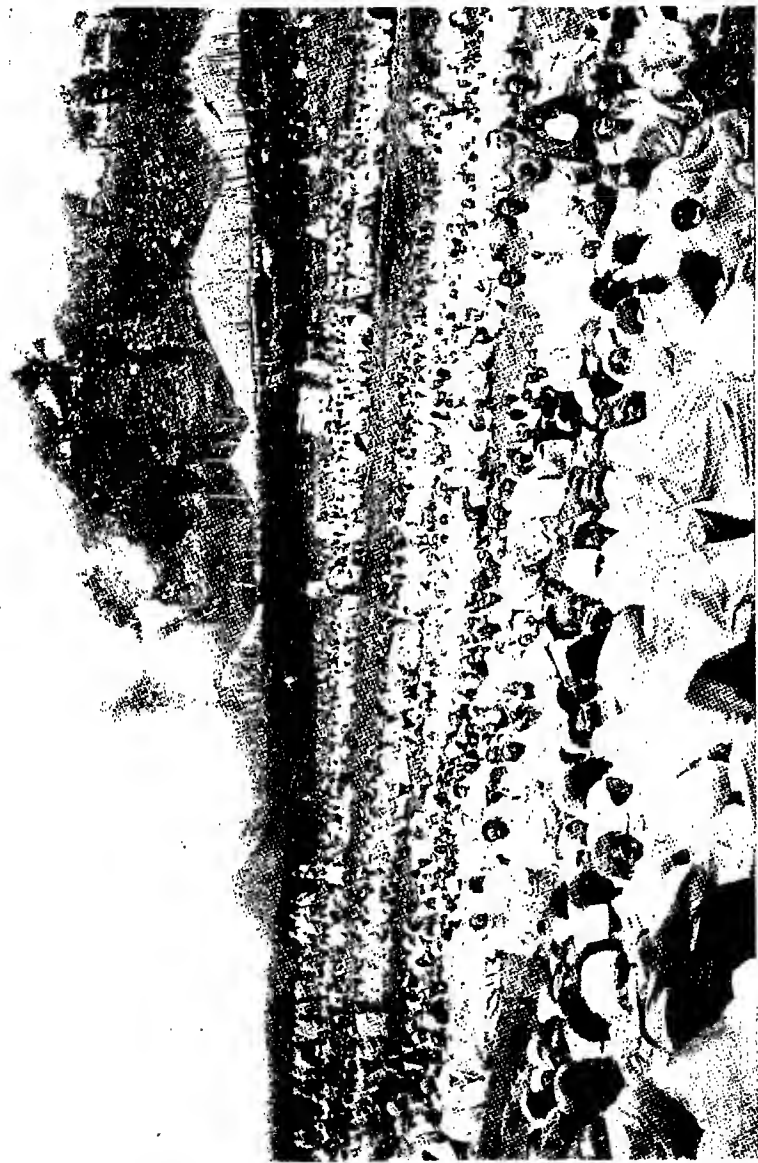
As we left our camp at Debra Markos a blare of music greeted us and a band of black slaves with trumpets and drums formed into a double line ahead of us. Some hundred soldiers massed behind us, while their officers, resplendent in lion's mane head-dresses and collars, their shields and swords of gold, their silk robes every color of the rainbow, rode on either side. We hardly recognized the boy *Grazmatch*, for his smiling, chubby face was surrounded by a green silk turban under a tasseled and embossed casque of silver, while the tawny ruffled fur stood up to his ears.

Gabra Gorgis looked wistfully at my shoes. "There is very little left of them. Have you no others?" he said, as we departed.

I promised to keep my feet as much in the background as possible, but forgot their tatters as soon as we entered the first court of the Gibbe. There are a series of these yards, each on a different level and, in the center of the highest, is an immense barnlike structure, which is the reception-room and banquet hall of the Ras. That morning each court was filled with a different stratum of courtiers and soldiers, so, as we mounted, each offered a more splendid display of color, jewels, and precious metal.

Before the main door, a few acres of carpets were spread and, on these, stood priests with giant crosses and flaming silk umbrellas, and officers so magnificent in welter of velvet and gold embroidery that one could not grasp any particular detail of the kaleidoscope they afforded.

The Ras came forward to meet us, a large man with a heavy, intelligent face, dressed in white and gold bro-



The crowd awaiting the descent of the Empress from the Holy Mountain.

cade, which only just showed under the long black cloak blazing with orders, among them English, French, and Italian. Together we passed into the clay and rafter hall, which, some 200 feet long, was thickly carpeted and roofed with a myriad hanging pennons. All the way to the couch, covered with embroidered satin cushions, which stood at the further end, we passed between massed rows of gorgeous vestments or emblazoned silks, girt with jeweled cartridge belts. Furs ruffled above vivid brocades, lion skins were wrought with filigree of metal, fringes, tassels, scabbards, sword hilts, and the great round shields were all of gold—the Abyssinian gold which is almost copper red and pliable as silk. I believe the Ras said afterwards that he had hoped to have a longer talk with the first Englishwoman who had visited him in Debra Markos, but conversation was difficult with two thousand pairs of eyes fixed on us. Hassen having disappeared, speechless from fright, I had, as interpreter, a soldier who hurled himself on his knees as soon as he saw the Ras, and without looking up, kept his forehead glued to the ground the whole time.

“Did you get a good picture?” I asked Jones, as we left the Gibbe.

“I don’t know,” he answered, “I never saw so much gold in my life—it blinded me.” He was moving uneasily in the saddle. “I can’t think what’s the matter with me,” he said, “I feel as if my clothes were full of pincers.”

“You’d better lie down and take some aspirin,” I suggested. “Hullo, what has happened to our camp?” A crowd of men in exquisite robes, jade-green, prim-

rose, and fuschia-purple, under their *chammas*, were putting up an enormous pavilion. Forty or fifty of these silk-clad palace attendants were holding the ropes, while others struggled with the center pole. Our tents' were dwarfed—they looked like green toadstools beside this sea of canvas. Gabra Gorgis rushed up to us.

"It is the Ras's own tent—he has sent it for you to use to-day.

I looked at the three partitions that were already pitched and the rolls of striped lining waiting to be hung.

"It is awfully kind—" I began, "Ugh!" A pair of pliers seemed to dig into my knee. Frantically I dived into my tent. Another sharp instrument nipped my elbow, and Jones's voice wailed outside.

"I believe this place is haunted, or I've turned into a pin cushion—you'd better give me that aspirin, quick!"

But I was searching for the pincers. They were very fast stuck in my flesh and it was with difficulty that I dragged out bits of black nobbiness.

"Lady, lady," cried Hassen, as I stared at the monstrous fragments, "come out quickly! We could not see last night, and we pitched your tents on an ant-heap!"

We lunched in the red and blue dimness of the government pavilion, and, from it, received the procession of *terj* and *talla*, sheep, bulls and a cow for milking, and quantities of pots, baskets and bales whose contents remained a mystery to us. One jar which, from its size and shape, ought to have harbored one of the forty thieves, contained honey. Gabra Gorgis extracted from the neck a stuffing of grass and several layers of mud. After that he scraped off thick discolored caking, and

underneath were gallons of most excellent amber honey, which we ate for weeks on every possible occasion.

Later, Ras Heilu came to return our morning visit. He rode a mule of which only the head was visible under its gold embroidered trappings, and, to emphasize the private nature of his visit, he left his battalions of horse and riflemen a few hundred yards away. Only his equerries—bearing sword, shield and gun in brocaded bags—ran after him and held up their *chammas* to shield his dismounting from the curious or perhaps from the evil eye. Heilu is the only semi-independent, hereditary prince left in Ethiopia, for the Conqueror Menelik, acknowledged the right of his father, Tekla Haimanot, to the style of Negus, or King of Gojam, though he allowed no other chief thus to approach the dignity of his own title, Negus Nebrasta, King of the Kings of Ethiopia. A daughter of Ras Heilu was wedded to the last Emperor Lyg Yasu, who is now imprisoned near Fiche and, it is said, always bound by a long golden chain to a guardian who is kin to the ruling house. The feudal lord of Gojam, most powerful and most intelligent of Zaiditu's governors, accompanied Ras Tafari on his European tour.

"Paris is for play, London for work," said Heilu, as we sat in the outer portion of the pavilion, drinking coffee—my guest would not have sugar in it because of the Lenten fast, solemnly observed by every Christian Abyssinian for forty days of bread and lentils.

"It is so typical," he continued. "Women buy clothes and jewels in Paris, but guns and boots come from London.

I asked him if he liked Europeans.

"Yes. You always remember what you've said. My countrymen say a thing one moment and forget it the next."

"Their memories are not trained," I suggested.

"Your books are your memories," smiled the Ras.

We talked about Egyptian politics and I noted that, with the exception of the Empress and the Regent, he was the first Abyssinian to discuss affairs outside his own country."

"You have done a great deal for Egypt," he said at last, "but you have not taught her to do anything for herself." There was a pause. "It is not good for a country to be milk-fed by strangers—" added Heilu, and I remembered that, though passing travelers are welcomed and royally entertained, no alien business man, no European, Arab or Indian merchants are allowed in Gojam. An enterprising firm sent sixty camel loads of "drygoods" to Debra Markos, intending to open a general store. The Ras bought up every load, returned the camels, and refused admission to any others!

Even the money of Addis Ababa is not current in this western province and we were obliged to exchange all our piastres, lions open-mouthed or shut, legless or curly-tailed, for bars of salt. These are about fourteen inches long and two inches thick and wide. Six of them can be obtained for a dollar, each carefully wrapped in cane fiber, and these constitute a porter's load on the march, so a man is paid about \$10 a month for the sole purpose of carrying seventy-five cents. Whenever a chief travels in Gojam, besides his rifleman, the grooms leading his horses in front of him, his slave

women burdened with ale and *tedj*, and one or two black boys carrying sword and shield, there are several mules loaded with bars of salt. These ambulatory purses carry ten or fifteen dollars' worth, but the salt caravans coming in from the north consist of pack horses each laden with 160 slabs—value under twenty-five dollars.

Just as we were wondering how and where we were to pack our cumbersome wealth, a messenger came from the palace bearing some attractive baskets, made by the women of Gojam with locally dyed grass. They were intricate, both in coloring and in shape, for some of them were like castles with different shaped towers, and others fitted with unexpected compartments, in one of which I discovered a pair of gold earrings, so soft that they could be twisted into any form. I told Balaina to translate my thanks, but our boy, who was the most obliging, earnest and stupid person I have ever met, was absorbed in finding flaws in the salt bars.

"This one is cracked," he moaned, "and I am sure this other is not full weight!" So I had to try to piece together a few words of Amharic.

"It is nothing," said the messenger, bowing to kiss my feet. "The Ras said, 'I would like to give much to the lady, but I do not think she wants anything from me.' " The youth smiled. "He is surprised because you did in one day a journey over which he takes three."

"Not willingly," I insisted, "I assure you, not willingly!"

The chestnut horse had lain down with so much decision at Debra Markos, that we had decided to leave it there; but, in the midst of the morning bustle of departure, Ras Heilu sent us three horses from which

to choose a substitute. They were all small, wiry, country breeds, with good shoulders and a touch of Arab about the head, but falling off in the quarters, which were light and narrow. I chose a bay as being the most hardy, and set out on it amidst a crowd of well-wishers, all full of advice and information. We were told by one that we should arrive at Debra Tabor in two days, and by another that, if we walked fast, we might get there in eight. Everyone talked at once except the *nagadi*, who had bought two new mules which had almost kicked to pieces our long-suffering baggage, and lost the best of his old ones, probably well on its way back to Addis by now, owing to a careless slave and a badly tied rope.

CHAPTER XIII.

GHOSTS AND GREED.

THE last farewells over, the last "God travel with you," "God guide your feet with smoothness,"

"Mary keep you," said, I glanced back along the caravan and decided we looked as if we were going to market, owing to the fact, we could do nothing with the oxen and sheep given to us. The Abyssinians eyed them wistfully, but would not eat, so a string of humped cattle and fat-tailed ewes were dragged along with us, since it is the worst discourtesy either to refuse or return a gift. Fortunately all these animals managed to get "lost" during the first few miles.

"Very convenient," said Jones to the most innocent looking *zabanier*, "I hope you got a good price for them!"

The ingenuous *Grazmatch* had departed with a last, very young smile, and in his place we had a slight, effeminate *Koyazmatch Makonnen*, smooth-faced as a girl, with a pouting mouth that would have been rosebud, had it not been black. How he hated traveling, and the only thing he would talk about was his two wives! One had been acquired in church, but the other, a doubtless highly respected concubine, was the preferred because she had given him a son. On this year-old baby he had already settled a collection of huts which

he pointed out to us proudly. "Whatever happens, no one can take the house from him," he insisted, so I wondered if he had had some trouble with his legal family.

We saw wild pig that day, and a leopard with a skin which made my mouth water, till I consoled myself by thinking that fashion would have tired of that slinky, suggestive fur, long before I returned to her sway. Jones stopped to photograph a flock of cranes, so tame that I had to gallop round them to make them rise and play their winged parts on the screen. There were vultures too, black and white crows, herons, and great hawks which stared at us, immovable, from the tip of almost every branch.

The land rolled up into little hills, each one crowned with its primitive church of mud and thatch, sometimes with the village store of barley drying in its outer corridor. Once we came upon a dozen priests reading the psalms from great vellum manuscripts under a hedge of flowers. Their pupils were boys ranging from self-conscious sixteen-year olds in robes of black sheepskin, with yellow hide capes flung back from their shoulders, to imps of five or six, naked but for a brown pelt complete with tail and paws, so that, hunched up on a bundle of straw, they looked like wide-awake little foxes. I tried to photograph them, but they instantly ranged themselves in a stiff row, as do all Abyssinians when they see a camera, for they are a self-conscious people, always anxious to pose, but very troubled as to how they are looking. I believe the townspeople will not pay a photographer for his work unless he manages to portray them as fair-skinned. Our soldiers always disapproved of the snapshots we took of them with an

ingenious camera that developed and produced the plate within two minutes.

"It makes us look black," they said resentfully, faced with an excellent reproduction of their coffee-berry darkness.

As we climbed a series of slopes thick with rose bushes, we heard singing in a neighboring village, and a woman rushed past us, wringing her hands, and uttering shrill, nasal moans.

"What is the matter?" I asked Hassen.

"She is going to cry for some one who is dead."

The track took us past a group of huts and, in front of one of them, a crowd of men and women jumped up and down, monotonously waving their arms above their heads to the rhythm of their song. After a few minutes, the measure quickened and, above the mass of bobbing heads, appeared a couch covered with a red and white *chamma*. Surrounded by the mourners, who continued their uncouth dance, with ashes and mud heaped on their heads and streaking their faces, the bed was carried to the church. Here it was handed over the wall to some priests, but the service they immediately began to read was lost amidst the persistent wailing and the wringing of up-flung hands.

The Koyazmatch Makonnen was an uncertain young man who could not decide where he wanted to camp.

"If we stay on the hillside there may be robbers," he said.

"I don't like camping near a village, for the dogs bark all night," I returned.

"I belong to the town," said Makonnen, "and I'm frightened of these places. If I go into the village to

get barley I must take two of your *sabaniers* with rifles to protect me."

"You can have Hassen if you like," I said, but the interpreter looked at me pathetically.

"Must I go? I am so afraid of the new mule. He will not leave me in peace."

It was difficult not to laugh, but after erecting the tents on a ledge facing the three-towered bulk of Arrat Makrak ridge, we secured the most placid of the baggage mules for Hassen and sent him into the village burdened with salt bars and a reluctant *Koyazmatch*.

"It's difficult to believe they are good fighters," said Jones, as he watched Makonnen beckon to a little black monkey of a slave-boy, whose bald pate was surrounded by a fringe of hair like curly astrakhan, to run after him with a rifle as big as his wizened self.

"They're all right if there are a lot of them together—it's a sort of mass courage, I expect."

"When they've talked themselves into a rage, I dare say they see red for a bit," reflected Jones, "but I shouldn't think it would last very long."

"It's lasted long enough to conquer most of their neighbors," I said, "and remember, it's always been backed by religious fanaticism or fear of a too-powerful rival. They are an independent people and determined to remain so."

We sat on the edge of a stubble terrace and waited for the return of our emissaries. Only Hassen came and he held an old and hoary white cock under his arm.

"Lady, the head man is away and they will not sell anything. I could get no food for the horses, only this fat bird."

Proudly he held out the spurred and scarred veteran of a dozen fights, solid with the muscles he had acquired in them.

"Thank you very much," I said gravely. "Where is the *Koyazmatch*?"

"I do not know. When the people would not listen to the Ras's paper, ordering them to give you hay and bread and eggs, he left quickly—I did not see him go!"

We found that the distressed young man, more courier than warrior, had taken refuge in the cook's tent, where Gabra Gorgis had fed him on biscuits. Gloom hung over the camp, for our improvident and irresponsible retinue, having eaten more *anjera* than appeared humanly possible the previous night, had thrown away the rest of the princely store provided by Ras Heilu. Now they sat forlorn and very empty, waiting for manna, or for me to go and buy them some fresh bread. Instead, I distributed a few dry biscuits and a deal of equally dry advice!

The hitch, of course, was due to the absence of the headman which provided an excuse for the villagers, unusually inhospitable, to say they had neither authority nor responsibility. In Abyssinia every order has to filter down from the Negus or Regent, through the provincial governors to their subordinates, who consist of lieutenant governors *chum-gultis*, the rulers of small districts, *chum-addis* the chiefs of grouped villages, and *chika chums*, headmen each of a separate village, so that it is often lost or very much altered on the way. Hence the best known Abyssinian proverb, "No dog knows its master's master," and each dog is terribly afraid of barking outside his own yard! I suppose the

ladder system supporting the platform of central control in Addis Ababa was meant by the astute Menelik to insure that no man should venture out of his sphere, but if one or two rungs of the ladder are missing all business is blocked indefinitely.

Next day we started to climb the Choke heights and the country changed in a manner as abrupt as it was curious. After an hour the ledges and slopes covered with long grass, the knolls crowned with villages, and the great clusters of trees which denoted a church, generally dedicated to Mariam or the warrior St. George, gave way to a mass of thistles, sweetbriar, red-hot pokers and yellow mustard, but they were all magnified into forest trees so that the branches and great gnarled trunks of the sweetbriar towered above us, thickly clothed in moss and hung with festoons of lichen. They looked like hoary old women, knobby in the joints, who, on top of their winter coats, had donned the most frivolous spring hats, burdened with golden flowers. The thistles began to prickle some twelve feet high, and their heavy purple heads must have been as many inches in diameter. Like enormous elephant trunks, one end stuck in the ground, the other holding a bunch of long polished leaves, another strange plant, perhaps a kind of aloe, reared its scaly gray stem to a height of twenty feet, before bursting into a tuft of green. After this, a withered, gray, furry spike appeared. We went up and up between these colorless, dead spears, till the sweetbriar lay below us like an amber carpet. There were only gray boulders and a gray mist which came creeping up over the caravan till, shivering, we wrapped ourselves in all available coats.

In the middle of acres of the elephant trunk plants we met a caravan descending. First came some silver decorated horses, with red saddle cloths trailing to the ground, then spearmen and riflemen, women with swathed baskets of bread and pitchers of *tedj*, and funny little slaves, with loaded rifles, which they used as sticks held by the barrel, or waved round them in reckless fashion. Behind all these, on a white mule, rode the *Feterari*, who was father to our unpromising world-weary Koyazmatch Makonnen. He was a delicious old man of seventy, round and wrinkled and gray. Chewing a piece of sweet grass, he dismounted and almost lifted me from the saddle.

"My daughter," he said. "Had you come to my house, I would have done much for you; but, as I meet you in the road, at least you must drink one glass with me."

An ebony maid unwrapped an enormous gourd at my feet and, through a corner of the scarlet stuff, strained out a bottle of *tedj*, from which we all drank in turn with the customary good wishes.

"Mary bless you."

"God keep your health."

The old general looked at me, twinkling.

"I hear there is no woman in Abyssinia like you; that you tire out three men and still ride, but you are disappointing to look at."

"Why?" I laughed.

"Too thin," he said. "Now promise me that you will stay to-night at my house, for I love you like a daughter and I would see you as large as your reputation."

"Could your hospitality do that for me in one night?" I asked.

The *F'eterari* gurgled. "Yes, I will give you so much butter (smoked and oily), milk and honey that to-morrow you will be too full to ride."

We thanked the old man and acknowledged that the prospect was tempting, but asked how far it was to his property. He screwed up his eyes still more, looked at the sun and answered.

"We have no hours, but if the tales they tell of you are true, you will arrive at three o'clock and your mules will have many pains."

Up to 11,000 feet we clambered and were so frozen that, in spite of one flapping sole and the other more hole than leather, I walked on and on between rocks and gray spikes and new green bunches that looked like pineapple tufts before the scaly stems pushed them up. At last, when our fingers were numb, the mist shredded under a whisk of wind and we saw below us stretches of green, close-shaven turf, like English lawns, with woods and glades of sweetbriars melting into a haze of emerald and topaz.

"All this belongs to my father," said the *Koyazmatch*, and the best of him appeared when he urged us to sleep in the largest of the clustered huts within a neat cane fence sheltering under the last thicket of flowers. The *tukels* looked comfortable and warm, but we were still sore from our experience at Debra Markos, so after excuses which were a tribute to the combined inventiveness of Gabra Gorgis, Hassen, and myself, we pitched our tents on a ledge above the stream. Here the boy brought us the usual "dergo," adding onions, lentils, oil,

saman or bitter butter, cloves, and a jar of colorless white liquid.

"What is that?" I asked, with a watchful eye on the pots of *tedj* which were now always stored in Jones's tent.

Since no prayer or plea could prevent our hosts' sending the liquor nor induce them to take it back, we used to dole out a drink to each member of the always varying escort and empty the rest into the night.

Gabra Gorgis's eyes were shifty as he picked up the gourd.

"It is for the servants," he said. "They use it in their cooking," and I would have left him with his prize, had not Jones intervened.

"Araki!" he exclaimed. "Give it to me."

The raw potent spirit which had been responsible for the cook's collapse at Harrar and for Omar's death was hidden in the recesses of my companion's flea-bag, to be thrown away at leisure, but his tent was ransacked while we ate mutton and rice in the starlight, and twice that evening while he was working, men slipped in with paltry excuses and eyes hungrily on the alert.

When I came out next morning, the sunshine seemed to have solidified into a trough made out of a tree-trunk, which had been set outside my tent.

"Honey!" said Balaina. "The slave women brought it for your breakfast and one of them has hurt her hand. It itches and she wants medicine."

"I thought it was meant for a bath," said Jones, emerging with all the things he had mended during the night.

He had a genius for reconstruction, and everything

from recalcitrant watches to broken glasses, wickless lamps, smashed locks or jammed rifles passed through his ingenious hands to emerge, sometimes quaint in shape, but eminently serviceable. We took a cup full of honey each, and balancing ourselves and our plates on the slope, tried to gnaw through biscuits that had the resistance of brick. While I was wondering whether it was crust or tooth which had cracked, a girl approached shyly, one arm under her *chamma*.

"Let me see your hand," I said, wedging my knee under the glissading coffee pot and considering the rival merits of Skeetofax and boric powder. Swiftly the robe was withdrawn and the hand thrust in front of me. I hope my face expressed no more than distress for a suddenly overturned coffee-pot, but I wanted no more breakfast that morning. Out of a mass incredibly swollen and distorted, split from fingers to wrist and horribly scarlet within, stuck two or three blackened twigs that must once have been fingers. The incredible thing was that the girl was plump and untroubled.

"You must go to a doctor," I said gently, burrowing in the medicine chest.

I washed and daubed and bound, while she played with the cotton-wool and told me: "There are no doctors in our country, except the Frangi at Addis, and that is too great a journey for a woman."

Silently we went down the last outposts of Choke till the rolling grasslands swept their stalks across our knees, sometimes up to our shoulders as we rode. There was much traffic of salt along a path consisting of a number of eight-inch furrows in which the mules stepped daintily, but which distressed our horses. The caravans



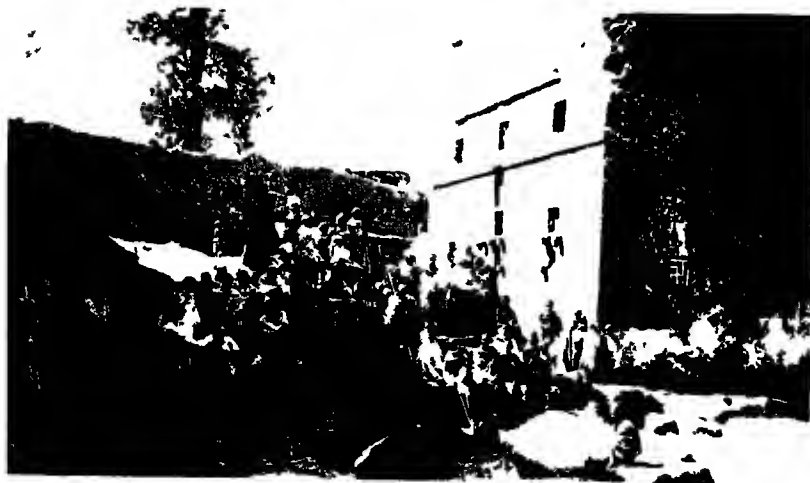
Monolith block of red rock carved into Church of Madane Alem, at Lalibela



Rock Church of Mariam, at Lalibela.



Pit hewn out of solid rock at Lalibela



Jones has an interested audience in Lalibela.

were nearly all of ponies, sturdy animals, with a load of 120 bars, but sometimes we met donkeys carrying half the weight, a value of approximately \$7.50. One or two family parties trekked along in procession, the men first, with spears and gourds, their possessions rolled up in a leather sheet carried on their heads, the women with children, fowls and kids in a bundle on their backs, and the ubiquitous bread basket balanced on their plaits.

The rear was always brought up by the communal purse bearer, his wealth of salt slung over his shoulder at the end of a stick.

For several hours we had talked of when we should arrive at Mota, or if we should arrive that day at all. The discussion had only been interrupted by the *Koyazmatch's* incessant begging, chiefly for cartridges which we did not possess, and my own insistence concerning the names of the villages we passed. When we had convinced our escort, who was very bored with us, and determined to leave us at the first excuse, that we had no spare ammunition, he resumed the subject of Mota.

"It is very far," he said. "We cannot get there."

"Well, we can camp as soon as we've done eight hours, wherever we are. By the way, what's the name of that village?" I pointed to a large collection of huts a few hundred yards away on a hill seamed with trees.

"Mota," said the *Koyazmatch* in a surprised voice.

It was early and there was fairly clean water in a ditch near a grove of table-top mimosas.

"Let's camp under there," I suggested, pointing to

the shade. "It should be nearly out of range of the village dogs."

Makonnen looked at me with horror.

"There are Moslem graves there," he said.

In spite of the gloom of the caravan, who were, for once, united in remonstrance—generally no two of them agreed—we insisted on pitching the tents under the fan-shaped trees where it was cool and clean. It was at least fifty yards from the broken wall surrounding two or three mounds and a tumble-down hut, and, after the first frightened hour, during which every one fingered an amulet, the retinue forgot spiritual in favor of material needs. The dear old headman, a roly-poly person with a Falstaffian simplicity, sent three hundred sheets of *anjera* to our camp and, from the mirth which echoed into the sunset, I suspect various gourds and jars had slipped past the lynx eyes of Jones. My companion had produced some marvelous soap guaranteed to destroy the illusions of even the most hardened bug. With this we went to work grimly, for the inhabitants of that *tukel* at Debra Markos displayed extreme tenacity and, afterwards, we spent a profitable hour in chasing their friends and families from blanket to canvas. Nothing was heard at our end of the camp but "I could kick myself! I missed a big one!" "That's twenty, but some of them were so tiny I feel like a massacre of the Innocents."

Suddenly Hassen appeared very troubled.

"I think the *Koyazmatch* has been drinking," he said.

The boy pushed after him in company with half a dozen gray-beards, who bowed and smiled and gave us charming, grave salutations, but Makonnen was over-

burdened with words. The Abbai river, Ras Heilu's border, was only an hour or two away. He would give us two men to go with us and he would return to the capital.

He did not want the revolver which, through Hassen, I had offered him as a souvenir of our three days' ride, nor would he let his two servants who had accompanied us since the morning, take the ten dollars I wanted to give them.

"It is not enough. I must have fifty dollars and a gun," he whispered into Gabra Gorgis's ear.

"He is very drunk," muttered the miserable Hassen.

"Wouldn't you like some coffee? I am sure you must be tired after our journey," I suggested, and Kabra Gorgis managed to drag away the youth who was evidently under the impression that all Europeans were millionaires as well as traveling armories.

Our cook had a way of producing sudden and very excellent novelties to vary our egg, chicken, and mutton diet. For dinner he made something so good with potatoes and a few herbs that I did not notice what an eyrie night it was. When our lamps were out, I opened the tent flaps to see clouds scudding across the new moon and branches signaling in an eddy of shadow and white light. It was very still in camp. Not a sound came from the men's tents and I told myself I could sleep without the usual stuffing of cotton-wool in my ears, but perhaps I missed the friendly burble of argument and song punctuated by Gabra Gorgis's shrill: "Be quiet. No speech! Have silence," which was always a signal for more noise.

I woke when it was very cold, and a strange knocking

made the night resonant. The wind rustled against my tent and a bird was wailing in a mournful crescendo that broke on the top note like a sob.

"What on earth can they be pounding at this hour?" I thought, and perhaps because I wanted to be reassured that it was only Jones hammering in a peg or the *nagadis* breaking up their salt, I went out, shivering. The moon was hidden behind a silver-edged cloud, but the stars made gray light under a network of shadows which looked alive. Beyond loomed the deserted death hut and the crumbling stones of its wall.

"Not much protection," I found myself thinking as I stared at the gaps. From beyond them, surely, came that insistent knocking. The bird had flown nearer, or perhaps there were two of them, for the cries echoed back and forth almost above my head and they were piercingly sad.

"Nonsense. Nonsense!" I repeated, without knowing quite what I meant.

I walked to the nearest tent. It was so silent that I could hardly believe half a dozen *zabaniers* slept in it. Cautiously I lifted a flap. It was empty. With uncomfortably pounding heart, I went to the two other dunquans, but there was no need to look inside them. Open and deserted, they gaped at the shadows. The knocking had become as menacing as it was inexplicable, for there was no other soul in the camp except Jones, presumably sleeping, as his tent was closed and silent. Stepping very lightly, afraid to disturb something unknown, I crept towards the broken wall. One dunquan had been pitched at a little distance from the others and, in the shadow of this, I nearly fell over a white bundle.

The thing had been rocking itself to and fro, muffled apparently in cerements, its eyes closed. It was whispering some chant with lips so dry and husky that the sound was a fragment lost in the sough of branches, the cracking of twigs. While I was still speechless, it must have become aware of my approach, for, with a shriek, it took its fingers, hung with half a dozen strings of amulets, out of its ears, flung itself in a heap at my feet, and resolved into a dust-stained *chamma* and the terrified figure of our groom.

"What on earth—" I gulped, conscious of a singular pounding in my throat. "I thought you were a—" Then I realized it would be better not to say what I had thought he was! "What are you doing here? Where is every one else?" I inquired with as much sternness as I could muster.

It was some time before Woldo Selessi became coherent.

"It's the lady, God keep us! Mary help us. It's the lady," he repeated several times. Then, invoking many saints, most of them unknown to me, between each sentence, he explained that, as soon as the effect of the headman's hospitality had worn off, *zabaniers*, servants, and local guard had crept prudently into the village. We had stayed to watch that the *nagadis's* mules did not eat the barley supplied for our horses.

"Weren't you frightened alone?" I asked, to see what he would say.

"Yes, without doubt, but the gray horse will get thin if those thievish beasts of baggage rob his food."

I wanted to pat him as he stood like a nice dog hunched up beside me, but I only said: "I could not

sleep because of that knocking. I thought you were still eating *anjera* and pounding salt to go with it."

He looked at me with a child's solemnity.

"It is the spirits of the Moslems who are buried there. They are knocking to get into heaven, but it is closed against them, for they did not believe."

Faint, but very close, the bird's note broke on a sob.

"Of course it is a bird," I told myself.

"Don't you hear them crying?" asked Woldo Selessi. "The spirits are shut up in the graves with their bodies and they can never get out. There is nowhere for them to go."

There was a pause. I hope it wasn't very long.

"The horses are shabaan-full," I said. "You must go to the village at once."

He hesitated.

"At once," I repeated. "I'm going to sleep." Which last I knew was untrue.

In the morning I tried to tell my wild experience to Jones, alert, unimaginative, practical, typical Londoner of the Twentieth Century. He laughed. It was very nearly a snort!

"You must have had a nightmare," he said.

We did have one a little later when the *Koyazmatch*, in his right mind again unfortunately, implored me to unload one of the mules which had gone on ahead, unpack my suit-cases and find for him the revolver which he had so scornfully refused under the influence of *tedj*. It was a humiliating scene and I am sure an unusual one, for, when I refused, as an example to the onlookers of the previous night, he alternately wheedled and abused, till we were obliged to mount and precede

him to the village. Here the headman was waiting to show us his three-hundred-year old church, of which he was intensely proud. It is delightful the way villagers speak of their church as the house of a friend where every one is welcome.

"You must come and see Mary," they say, or "Salute George with us—he is on your road."

The faded frescoes at Mota, as ancient as the simple building which contained them, and the fine missals they looked down upon, were blended into a soft harmony of color. Their primitive dignity lacked the element of "frightfulness" introduced into the modern religious paintings. The headman was a charming guide, learned in saintly legends, and I thought how attractive were these old Abyssinians; for, whatever their rank, whether generals and governors, or village priests and headmen, they have a simple, reserved assurance, which is as courteous as the arrogance of the young men is the reverse. In the East the claim of age is recognized. Youth runs its errands and kisses the hem of its garments. The man who is "great in years" has more than experience, memory, and wisdom. Because of his age, not in spite of it, he is mantled with veneration, crowned with deference, and fully conscious of these insignia of state, he is worthy of them.

It was pathetic to leave the stories of the headman for the frantic greed of the young *Koyazmatch*. He rode with us through the empty market, shaded by three gigantic warka trees. As we sidled through dust and interested onlookers into paths which twisted between hedges of lilac, jasmine, and a pink flowering privet, amidst which the huts were buried, he begged, wrangled,

stormed, till I might have given way to save his countrymen so disgraceful a spectacle, but for Hassen, who insisted:

"There has been too much asking for baksheesh. He refused your gift, hoping to get something bigger, and he has not even done for you what his master commanded, since he was told to go with us to Debra Tabor."

"He hates traveling," I said, weakly.

"He loves baksheesh," retorted Hassen. "He has heard tales, and I tell you in this country whatever you give a man he is not satisfied. If you scatter hundreds of dollars a day, you will not please every one. Do not give now to one who has insulted all of us."

So we begged Makonnen to return, thanked him, sent our salutations to his father, said it was nice of him to say he would accept the trifling souvenir offered him, but that it was packed, loaded, and several miles ahead, so we would not bother him with such a small thing.

Convinced at last that he had failed, the *Koyazmatch* threw prudence as well as dignity to the winds.

"Yella! Get out!" he shrieked. "I am done with you. I will not send guides with you. Go alone!"

Turning his mule, he would have kicked it into a backward gallop, but I interposed.

"I am afraid I cannot allow you to behave like this," I said quietly. "You were told to go with us to Ras Gooksa. That, of course, is impossible after what you have done, but you will send two guides with me now, at once, or I shall report your conduct to Ras Heilu."

There was a pause.

"And you will without doubt go to prison," said Hassen contentedly.

A struggle was obvious in the weak face before us, and at last, while I sat motionless and indifferent, for we should, of course, be much better off without unwilling guides, the *Koyasmatch* capitulated.

"I will come with you," he said.

"You will not! You will not travel another mile with my caravan, but you will provide two men who know the country and whom I shall pay. You can send them after me."

I turned and rode away. Ten minutes later a couple of spearmen pattered after us, but we had already "taken up," as Gabra Gorgis put it, a local wiseacre who swore he knew every yard of the road, so were able to ignore the surly followers of Makonnen.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM THE NILE TO THE CHOCHA.

THAT fellow wanted kicking," said Jones, as we began the descent into the far away depths which hid the Abbai or Blue Nile.

"He evidently had a false impression of our finances," I suggested.

"Well, I don't know where he got it from," returned Jones. "My only coat is marked with all the different muds we've been through."

"Did you say muds or meals?"

My question was ignored.

"As for you, I can't imagine what'll happen if the string gives out."

"I know," I said regretfully. "It's buttons. They always come off at night when I'm tired or want to write, and in the morning they're hopelessly lost."

"There's still a little sticking plaster left," said Jones consolingly, and then, "Are you going to write to Ras Heilu about that fellow?"

I hesitated.

"No, I don't think so. He's got such a nice father."

"Search me! What a feminine reason!"

But, as we plodded down by hairpin twists that tied the mules into knots and made us as giddy as the needle of a cheap compass, I considered the question of traveling in Abyssinia. European caravans are still so rare,

and the conception of hospitality so liberal, that the right of "dergo," levy of food for man and beast is often given to hunter, explorer, or wandering diplomat. In order to see that it is complied with an official guide is generally provided, varying in rank and in the number of his inevitable following, according to the position of the traveler, whose difficulties, therefore, are apt to be in exact ratio to the honor the local Ras wishes to pay him. Without "dergo" it is often impossible to get food for two or three days' stretch, but a few dollars should provide sufficient advance store of chickens, eggs and barley to cover such lean periods. By his contract the *nagadi* must produce grass for his own mules—four donkey loads may be had for a real—and every *zabanier* and servant is paid in advance five dollars a month for his food, ample, since a hundred sheets of *anjera* cost a real and two at most suffice for the day. Even if every unit of the caravan, human and animal, had to be fed, it could not cost more than two and a half dollars per man and three dollars per mule a month, but traveling under a government writ increases expenses tenfold. Long before one has recognized the latest additions to the escort, changing with every village or district, before one can add up the number of new guides, before one has finished thanking for a gourdful of milk, dollars are expected to stream out of some sort of magic casket, since no mule could carry the number required. Of course it is the bounty of the government which is extended to travelers, but it is a local *Grazmatch* or *Koy-azmatch* who regulates its flow, who, with deep bows, piles up the fruits of Ceres before the tents. It is natural that one should wish to express appreciation of

such an attractive and time-honored custom, but, in a land where presents are so common that their value is in exact ratio to their price, it is difficult to satisfy every one.

"What an angel the *ballambarassi* was!"

I sighed, remembering the unvarying and disinterested courtesy of Gabra Salessi.

"He was a thoroughly good sort," agreed Jones. "But why think of him at this moment? It'll probably be your last."

He pointed to where the path apparently stopped and a great rock slid sharply into space.

"Shall we walk?"

After consideration we were lowered by the four strongest *zabaniers*, who were so afraid to let go of us that, for a moment we dangled, expostulating, kicking, arm-pits threatening to crack. Hassen refused to be parted from his mule. "I dare not try to get on him again down there," he said, and, with eyes shut, gripping the pommel, he slithered—crack, the girth broke, and, in a heap, interpreter, saddle and surprised mule landed in a thorn bush which stood the strain just long enough for man and beast to be hauled into safety. The horses proved our greatest difficulty. The gray went too fast and, with a horrid squeal, his hind legs slipped over the edge of the cliff. Breathless we watched while two muleteers seemed to wedge themselves under his quarters and lift them back. After this, the bay refused to face the drop, whirled back, lost his footing, came down backwards and hung suspended by the bridle, against which the groom braced himself in a whirl of hoofs and stones.

"I hope there are no more bits like that. I feel rather sick," I said when, by a miracle, every animal was safely ahead.

"It's the heat," said Jones. "I've never felt anything like it."

The thermometer registered 108° F. Shut in between black rocks, choked by the wadding of dust which lined every ledge and crack, and lay a foot thick between the stones, we felt as if we were being cremated.

"Only it's so slow," said Jones, as a blast parched us. "I wish they'd shut the door and have done with it."

It took us five hours to descend the three thousand feet to the Nile bed. After we had crossed the almost dry, twisting creek of Agum Waha, which we had hoped was the river, and climbed red-eyed and masked with dirt through a chaos of boulder and thorns, we saw a ribbon of blue water. It was deep and compressed between cliffs which looked unscalable, but, after negotiating the Portuguese bridge, we found a path was painted in dust across the blackness. Up it, we toiled with mouths caked and eyes sunk in black patches, at the rate of a mile an hour. All afternoon the sun was pitiless. With no breath of wind, no cloud in a molten sky, we labored grimly and silently towards a tableland which promised flatness but always a thousand feet or so above us.

"It's a mirage?" I said, as ledge after ledge was surmounted, always to show some further heap of rock, blistering-hot to the touch, polished to the slipping hoofs. The last mile we crept up on foot, eyes shut, I think, four of us limping ahead, a train of casualties scattered behind us. A mule had fallen and wrenched a back

tendon. Most of their backs were raw. All had cuts on back or knee. Balaina had torn off a toe-nail, a *zabanier* had sliced open the sole of his foot through a sandal, and another had put out his shoulder. The groom was doubled up with what he called a broken rib, but when, blind with weariness, I had exhausted the resources of the medicine chest and was left surveying a minute packet labeled "tabloid, one compressed finger bandage," he relented and assured me it was only "fatigue eating his middle."

Towards sunset a procession of halt and maimed crawled to the first piece of flat ground on the top of the cliff, and lay down in the midst of some mildly interested cattle. A long time afterwards the tents were pitched, I don't know how or by whom. I stumbled into mine, found a pillow and, with one foot sticking out through the last remnants of its boot, went to sleep. In the morning we studied the map and nearly tore it up because it refused to allow that we had done more than twelve miles!

"I'd like to get the fellow who made it out here and watch him take a straight line from Mota," said Jones.

"Yes. I think it would be more useful for airmen," I agreed, and stared ahead to twin villages, Majer and Wolka, that were dots on the saffron grass.

"I feel as if all my bones had been removed and cotton-wool put in their place," I remarked, wondering how far beyond those *tukels* I could push the caravan.

"Odd. I've got dozens and dozens of bones to-day. They're sticking out of me all over. I'm prickly with 'em like a smelt!"

Slowly we marched across dry grass strewn with

stones and cracked between the dunes into parched water-courses. Every humped ridge had its village with a bunch of trees hiding the church. Genta was a green splash to our left; Shimie hill, a flare of red convolvulus which almost hid its huts. Then a valley, golden with hay, cooled by a real river, rippling between the fringed green of olive, thorn, and flowering briar, opened in front of us. It had stretches of turf where browsing cattle promised milk, and the air was flower scented. For a few miles we rode through the narrowing glen which slipped gradually further into the tangle of its bordering woods. We splashed across the stream where it ran crystal clear over pebbles and succumbed to the temptation of smooth sward shaded by mimosas.

"Praise be to Allah. Blessed Mary!" ejaculated Gabra Gorgis, catholic in his gratitude, and installed himself rapidly with half a dozen twigs, three stones and a coffee-pot.

As usual it began to rain just as Balaina was arranging the film-cases as a dinner table. Within three minutes there was a downpour. Saddles, plates, and cutlery, a dish of ragout—we never dared to inquire what this was made of!—and Jones entered my tent simultaneously with what appeared to be a waterspout. The canvas was about as much protection as a piece of mosquito netting. Amidst thunder and lightning fused into one crash of sound and flame, rain poured in on us. First the lamp went out. Then, as in our efforts to rescue what was now ragout soup, we had a tug of war in the darkness, the pegs were torn up and the tent came squelching on to our heads. For a few minutes the wind bellied it into wet heaps, under which we huddled. Then

the weight of water conquered and it became a shower-bath which spouted whenever we moved. Our shouts for help brought no response from the kitchen tent, and we were too mixed up with food, luggage and collapsed bedding to be able to extricate ourselves. Jones made one effort, but the result was disastrous, if one could judge by the sound. I think he encountered the sharp edge of a film case, and then knelt on a knife, so we were obliged to continue our undignified wailing till Balaina thought it wise to respond.

"Oh pity!" he exclaimed in his deficient Arabic. "The pegs will all now be lost!"

Sitting in a puddle of coffee and stew with water running down my neck, I remembered quite a lot of Bedouin abuse, but I'm afraid the boy was not proficient enough to understand it.

The following day provided us with considerable contrast in the way of weather and of scenery. First the enchanted valley shed its garment of olives and wild roses and crumpled into a ridge, which we crossed by the village of Burra. Then with sunshine scattering the clouds, we came to a golden dish between the hills where reapers were hard at work, row after row of them, a strip of leather round waist and forehead, toy scythes in their hands. Jones set up the camera, knee-deep in the grain, but the result was surprising, for the whole concourse threw themselves on their knees and bowed repeatedly, their eyes screwed up, their heads burrowing into the earth.

"They think it is magic," said Hassen, and addressed them in halting Amharic.



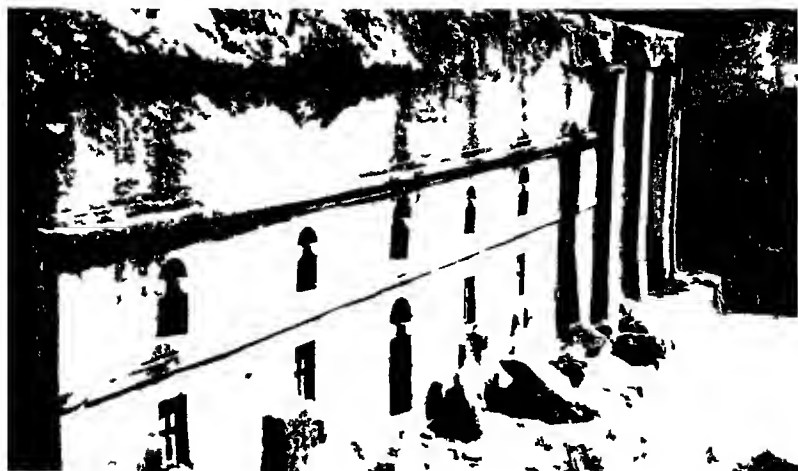
An underground door into a rock church at Lalibela



Trough around a rock building Tunnel entrance can be seen half bricked up.



Curved rock facade of underground church Tibnos, at Tihbet



Facade of the largest underground church Midme Alen, at Tihbet

"If that thing looks at me I shall die," wailed a woman, tearing at her very scanty covering.

"A good picture," remarked Jones. "The Abyssinians are a devotional race."

"Are you going to call it 'harvesting'?" I asked.

"What about a harvest thanksgiving?" he suggested laughing, and added: "I say, I believe that woman thinks she's dead." For Hassen was still trying to reassure the victim of an imaginary assault!

The barley gave way to dense and prickly thickets through which we had to push our way with arms across our faces. Emerging from one of these we saw across a valley, scarred with hillocks and ravines, Mahadera Maryam superb on the crest of a great cliff. Towards its huts and churches we labored all afternoon, and reached it when the shadows were long, after a scramble which lamed my horse. The women were passing in procession to a stream whose only name was "Wash clothes water." They were laden with immense jars and bundles, while the men propped themselves on long canes to look on.

"Why don't you help her with her load?" I asked a youth who strode beside the prettiest girl, talking over her head to a friend. At first he only laughed. Then, the question repeated, he answered, "It's women's place to work. Men have to fight." I remembered the saying of an Arab chief in Yemen. "Man carries the gun. Woman the child and the scythe. So Allah has ordained." Only, in Abyssinia, she is burdened with the ale pot as well, and often the men appear readier with their tongues than with their rifles.

Mahadera Maryam, "full of priests, poor men and

beggars", according to Hassen, refused to sell us any food, though he proffered a choice of dollars, cartridges and salt. There was no grass on the cliff, so mules and horses went hungry, and we should have followed their example but for a girl's vanity. She passed my tent as I was washing in very muddy water drawn from some hole, for, as always, the village was far away from the rivers in the valley on either side. For a long time she stood staring, her dark face wrinkled with the puzzle of her thoughts. Then she ran away to return later with a handful of eggs and a white chicken. I looked at them greedily.

"Can't we persuade her to sell them?" I asked Gabra Gorgis.

The cook shrugged his shoulders.

"She'll want some white stuff or cloth." But after a shrill duologue he turned to me surprised. "She wants soap," he announced.

"Thank heavens! We shall have some supper!"

I fumbled in my suit case and produced a packet.

"It is a special piece she wishes—like the one she saw you using."

"This is the same."

Gabra Gorgis translated, and the girl's face lit up as she took the tablet.

"We have no soap in this country to make our skin white," she murmured, and kissed my hand, feeling it afterwards to see, perhaps, if the effect of the washing was permanent. "At first I thought you were not real," she added. "Then I saw you use this soap and I understood."

Gabra Gorgis and I looked at each other blankly.

"You must explain," I ordered. "She'll be so terribly disappointed when her blackness doesn't come off in the wash," but the cook was contemptuous.

"It matters not. The chicken is fat."

It must also have been a willing bird for, next morning, tied between two film cases on the back of a mule, it managed to lay an egg as we clattered up and down the shifting rock between the cliffs of Mahadera Maryam and Debra Tabor. They face each other across a series of lower ridges, and for six hours we rode through typical Abyssinian country. It was thickly wooded, strewn with the loose granites and sandstones which had worked up through the soil, and crumbled into sharp folds with river beds under each hill. The Gomara river had to be crossed half way between the two villages, and the only way down to it was blocked by a very dead mule. We held handkerchiefs to our noses, while the men removed it, piecemeal!

Debra Tabor is the capital of Ras Gooksa Woli, the husband of the Empress Zaiditu. Political intrigue, no respecter of domesticity in Abyssinia, keeps him banished from Addis Ababa, and his palace consists of a quantity of large huts, some square, some round, within an imposing quadrangle, which seems to hang over the very edge of the cliff, looking south towards Mahadera Maryam. On the other three sides the mushroom town is scattered pell-mell over several slopes, sometimes clustering into definite groups, sometimes straggling amidst scrub and stunted trees. We pitched our camp low down beside the only water, and took stock of the mules. They were beginning to look very tired, and I suspected that, on the nights when no "dergo"

was sent to our camp, the *nagadi* bought no feed for them. He had contracted to take us to Asmara in a certain time—a precaution against the local habit of camping at noon—but, though we had taken nearly double the number of mules necessitated by our weight of baggage, and bought two new ones at Debra Markos, the perpetual climbing under a blazing sun and the terrible state of the tracks, above all, careless loading with insufficient padding, had taken toll in lameness and sore backs.

“If we get as far as Gondar with this lot, we shall be lucky!” I thought, and went out to see if any extra animals could be hired or bought in a town thriving on the hide trade, to which it devotes every living beast, two-legged or four.

When I returned from a futile search I found the camp full of black peaked capes and rifles. Ras Gooksa had heard of our arrival and sent us greetings, charmingly expressed by an officer, and tangibly emphasized by lowing, bleating and squawks. Having replied as adequately as possible through the medium of Gabra Gorgis, who was so hypnotised by his own eloquence that it was difficult to curtail it, I was going to my tent, when Jones burst out of his.

“You must come to my rescue,” he exclaimed. “I’m afraid he wants my hat.”

Passing through the flaps I saw a hirsute individual, woolen-cloaked, bare-headed, fingering my companion’s felt.

“It’s my only one,” urged Jones. “And he won’t leave it on me. Incidentally, I don’t understand a word he says!”

"Get Hassen to deal with him," I returned. "Even to save you from sunstroke, I couldn't cope with him!"

By dint of tying every tent string, turning out the lamp, and saying firmly, "I am asleep," whenever there came from outside a murmured, "He says 'do him a favor', and he wants——" I foiled the determination of beggars, engaging and otherwise, and we were able to set off next morning with all our possessions intact.

While the caravan trailed ahead, we went to the Gibbe to greet Ras Gooksa, who was hospitably distressed because we could not stay longer in Debra Tabor.

"One day is nothing," he urged. "It has neither value nor importance."

He flicked his fingers to denote the insignificance of time, but we had grown used to dealing with this suggestion, for we heard it hourly from every member of the caravan.

"In England we say time is more important than money."

"How can that be?" said the Ras, in an awestruck voice. "Time is purposeless, but money is of great use!"

His eyes grew as round as his face on which the hair appeared to be stencilled till the beard ruffled out in a tip-tilted point. We sat in a large barn, mud walled, strewn with grass. The ceiling was made of gaily painted cane and, behind the sober black and white of the officials, seated cross-legged on some carpets, was one of the usual big divans, very soft and squashy-looking, covered with a blue bedspread, and surrounded on three sides by curtains. I have never seen anyone sit-

ting on such a couch of state except the Empress, so perhaps it represents the throne.

"Why do you travel so quickly?" pursued the Ras. "You have no time to eat or drink."

"Owing to your hospitality," I countered, "my men ate all night and are now so fat that they cannot walk."

Ras Gooksa smiled.

"You evidently did not follow their example!"

Having scored a point, he added: "Walking in Abyssinia is not good, and I hear your horse is lame, so I will give you one very big and fat to take you to Asmara as fast as you like."

In spite of protests, when we reached the court, walled with the rifles of the guard, I found two country-breds had been substituted for my sleek racer. One was a dun pony who treated my borrowed English bit as a piece of paper, so that we charged everything at a funny, bouncing pace. The other, a mighty white stallion, was of the gentle show-horse type. He curvetted clumsily with arched neck, and was equally ready to throw himself instantly into a gallop or pull up on his haunches in a length.

"Thank the lord," said Jones. "They've both got manes."

I agreed and, taking a firm grasp of the most bushy, I was able, for once, to foil the determination of the Abyssinian saddle to become a breastplate. Amidst a mob of dogs, goats, children, soldiers, beggars, chamberlains, and a calf which would get wedged under one of Jones's stirrups, we rode out of Debra Tabor.

It was the seventeenth day of our trek from Addis

Ababa, and we had done some 650 miles since leaving Somaliland. Another 90 separated us from Lalibela, and we were told there was "a very upset road" on the way to our goal. So, where the going was good, smooth red dust in the cups between the hills, we hurried after the caravan, overtook it in two hours, and marched firmly at the mules' tails for the rest of the day. The *nagadis* had no chance to "aglist"—fatal word that means anything passive, to stop, to unload, to sit down, to talk round a fire. It must be written across the heart of every Abyssinian! We camped above a ravine, and were awakened after midnight by a terrific noise in the village a few hundred yards away. Shots were plentiful, but they were drowned by the vocal armory. Half-dressed, our *zabaniers* rushed from their tents, determined to contribute to the general excitement. I seized the nearest flying figure, and explained that they were supposed to defend the camp, not to take part in any local squabble.

"But what a pity to waste these rifles!" urged one, and then there was a cry from the smallest and blackest, who was an excellent cobbler, but could not hit a stationary gazelle at thirty feet!

"Aie! I have no bullets. I paid my last this evening for some *talla*!"

There was an uncomfortable silence, and no one offered to lend any ammunition.

"The lady changed all her salt for bullets in Debra Tabor," murmured someone. "Ah, lady, a favor, I have the salts that you gave me when I mended your holster. Take one for a bullet I implore you!"

"You are much safer without it," I retorted.

"Perhaps," snorted Jones. "But it won't make much difference to his enemy!"

The uproar above us gradually died down and we learned that, though two or three villagers had suffered from the misdirected blows of their neighbors, the thieves who had broken into the headman's yard, had escaped. I was glad to be able to keep my new coin of the realm, for the salt bars of Gojam are useless in Gondar or Lasta, where cartridges take the place of money, at the rate of six to a dollar.

From Debra Tabor to Lalibela should be a four days' march, but an hour after we struck camp on the second day, at the crossing of the Yikala river, we took the wrong road. In this part of Abyssinia a "road" is often only a sense of direction, and our guide, an old man, with a face like a walnut trimmed with astrakan, turned resolutely south. I was surprised for, though the map showed no route between the two places, it marked our destination east of Ras Gooksa's capital. It was not till we had ridden for a couple of hours in a direction which compass and chart agreed was diametrically wrong, that I insisted on explanation. After ten minutes, during which every member of the caravan talked at once, but was unable to drown the falsetto of our guide, Atto Miquael, I discovered that Gabra Gorgis had hopes of getting some money, whether gift, loan or a sum due to him was not apparent, from a man who lived on this southern road. He had, therefore, bribed Atto Miquael with the gift of my cow, which he told me had run away in the night, to pretend there was no other way of reaching Lalibela. The wrath of the caravan, when the plot was made clear, would

have been comical if the mules had not already been so tired.

"If we go on like that, we shall soon be back in Addis Ababa," stormed Atto Belacho, but when I suggested that we should retrace our steps to Yikala, I was overborne by the native optimism which is always convinced that something lucky and improbable will happen. The guide swore that very shortly his road made a sudden turn northward, and he continued to swear it with every mile we went south. Finally, when even the cook had ceased to assure me the two roads joined just beyond the next hill or the next turn, I took matters into my own hands, swung the mules at right angles across ploughland and grass, through scrub and rock, and kept them straight by compass. The *nagadis* searched every succeeding horizon for a landmark, and the guide, lamenting, revealed the full extent of his baseness, for it appeared that he had meant to desert us at the house of Gabra Gorgis's debtor or benefactor, and return to Debra Tabor on the plea that he knew the way no further. When Atto Belacho, watching the fifth mule go lame, entered the vocal contest, Atto Miquael turned round.

"I will come no further," he said. "It is foolishness and we are lost." He stalked away, but I sent two *sabaniers* after him, and told the man he would be a prisoner until he brought us to a village on the right road. The rifle on either side of him had a sobering effect, but to ensure his compliance, we relieved him of his mule, slave and gun, and mounted him on one of our own beasts. By afternoon everybody's faith in my compass had failed.

"It cannot see where we are going, for it is not alive. How then can it help us?" reiterated Daiwitu, the second *nagadi*, and a few minutes later: "Faith of Jesus! It is bewitched. There is Mashallamia Abu."

I looked at the twin villages on a hill in front of us. "Are they on the way to Lalibela?" There was a gloomy conference. "In any case they are not on the way to Addis Ababa," vouchsafed Atto Belacho.

After persistent inquiry, we learned that we were now on a track which would eventually take us to our destination, but that we must pass through the Chocha on the way. What exactly the Chocha was we could not discover.

"An evil place," stuttered a muleteer. "Let us hurry and get through before dark," muttered a depressed, but not in the least ashamed Gabra Gorgis. "No. No. We must wait here till early to-morrow," urged the guide. Everybody was too angry with him to listen, and we set off under a cloudy sky to reach the mysterious Chocha. By three the pasture lands had broken up into great gorges, with pinnacles and tables of rock rising out of them. An hour later we plunged down into the gloomiest of these chasms.

"We are at the gate," said Atto Belacho, and, in proof, a white figure emerged from the rocks, and demanded to see our customs pass. Like all his fellows, he was unable to read, but the stamp impressed him, and he waved us on.

"You will not get through before night, and there is no water," he remarked.

The Chocha is a peninsula of rock, shaped like an octopus. It is joined by one tentacle to the tableland

beyond, and all the others jut out into the crevasse which surrounds it. Why any route should choose to attack such an obstacle I do not know, but, with painful perseverance, the path we sought twisted up and down and round everyone of these jagged rock-strewn hills. Sunset found us bewildered by the manifold turns, and aghast at the prospect of no water for the horses after a ten hours' march. It was an uncanny land, for on every tilted ledge a few goats or cattle browsed, wherever a rock shelf was level shimbura lay drying. On each wind-swept ridge grass was mown and durra straw neatly stacked. Yet there was no sign of a hut or a human being. A caravan of some hundred monkeys, prowling through stubble, barked at us as we passed.

"Perhaps it is they who work the fields," said a frightened muleteer.

"In truth, it is a strange country," returned Atto Bel-acho. "Farms on all sides, but no houses! The people must be like animals and live in holes under the ground."

As it grew dark we reached a few yards of level ground under one of those lonely churches girdled with trees, which crown each eminence in this priest-ruled land. It was deserted. The wind howled through its gaping thatch and swung the cross back and forth above it.

Gloomily we camped. The little water that was in our bottles had to be given to the escort, who, improvident as the Children of Israel, had drunk their own supply before mid-day. Jones and I had a quarter of a cup of milk each. We measured it meticulously and

were very honest about it, reserving the remaining tablespoonfuls for the morning. While we were smoking and trying to pretend we were not thirsty, a quaint figure in a high white turban and leather cape appeared on a slope opposite us. In moonlight and through the long grass he looked unreal, and I was not certain that I had not imagined him till we saw the flicker of flame and an odd shape crouched beside it. It gave no answer to our hail and, before we could reach it, the fire was extinguished and the man disappeared.

The one bright moment of the evening was when Hassen, who had gone foraging, returned very pleased with himself and a sack of shimbura for the mules.

"Did you steal it?" I asked, "or did you find a house?"

"There are no houses here. It is very strange," he answered. "I saw a man sitting by a fire in the open, watching his grain. I asked him, 'where is your hut?' and he don't answer but, when I question him many times, he say, 'far away', and not speak again. So I give him a handful of bullets and he let me take the shimbura, but he never look at me."

"I will give you everything you like if you'll go back and ask him where water is," I suggested. Hassen shivered.

"I dare not," he answered.

In couples the *zabaniers* searched the nearest hollows and once there was a cry of triumph, "Water!" but there were only a few inches oozing through mud. The liquid was a rich coffee color, and it failed to fill one bottle!

CHAPTER XV.

RED LALIBELA.

WE were up early next morning and toiling round the tentacles of Chocha before the sun had won its daily battle against the mists, but very soon we knew it was going to be a hot day, and there was still no sign of water. Another Church stared down at us from a cone, but it was empty and, though corn and cattle continued to offer a puzzling problem, we saw no house, and nothing more human than a baboon, till we reached the further "gate" of this strange mountain. Here again a figure seemed to materialize out of rock and dust, gaped at our pass, said indifferently, "There is water in an hour," and faded into the mist.

The tableland was smooth grass and, at first, every clump of bushes gave hope of a water hole. We met several travellers on foot or on mules, and they all stared at us vaguely, and said: "There is a river in front—not far," or "In one hour at most you will find water." It was more than twenty-four hours since the horses had drunk and, under a fierce sun, they dragged behind, heads trailing, legs jerking automatically. The mules drooped, and we had to change loads several times, while the men were so thirsty that, for nearly three hours, no one spoke.

We did not find the river at all that day but, after six hours' march, we came to a water-hole under a rock

shelf. Into this the mules precipitated themselves, using their loads first as levers, then as a solid barricade, through which the horses would have torn a way with teeth and hoof had we not interfered. For the rest of the afternoon our way lay across the tableland, and, by dint of following the compass and invariably taking the track which old Atto Miquael warned us was the wrong one, we arrived at the edge of the great cliff above Gara Gara valley. Down this we crept by stony spirals. At four o'clock we had negotiated the last amazing shelf which tilted us almost straight down several hundred feet into a land of small villages and fields, equally thickly strewn with rocks and goats. At Talga we spent a night rendered forlorn by the remarks of the friendly inhabitants, who said we "had seen a lot of country," or "had done a curious walk," and, to console us, offered us chickens and stale eggs—the forty days' fast is responsible for a plethora of these!—at an exorbitant price in cartridges.

We left Talga, rich in beggars, locusts and birds as small as butterflies of the most brilliant metallic blue, with the firm intention of reaching Lalibela by sunset. All night the mules had been eating shimbura and barley, so the *nagadis* urged them forward over rough, hilly country where half the streams were dry, the grass was burned white, and snakes rustled into cracks in the parched earth several inches wide. Many of the thorns were vermilion-barked and on this curious red the spikes looked like a powdering of silver. We saw monstrous black birds rather like turkeys, several jackals, and quantities of field mice, whose holes were so numerous that in some places, the ground looked like a sponge.

It was Saturday, so there was traffic of salt, cartridges and hides on the path. One man overtook us dressed in a leopard skin, the head hanging over his shoulder, his curls coated with butter.

"That is a sign that he killed the beast with a spear," explained Atto Belacho. "When my father lived a man anointed himself only when a lion fell to his lance, but these people boast of little things!"

All through the day we asked each person we met, "Can we get to Lalibela to-night?" and if they felt happy they answered. "Of course, it is near." But if they were footsore or cross, they said, "It is two days distant."

For endless hours and an 11,000 foot ridge, flat as a table top, barred our horizon. We labored towards it across range after range which it dwarfed to molehills, and always we hoped that our goal was situated on one of its clearly-marked ledges. When the light was ruddy with the promise of evening, we crept round the flank of Befi Mountain, and, after a score of false promises of—"the river is near, in front of you," we reached the great Takkazyé. Its bed was a sheet of stones with several rivulets flowing through the deepest channels. Beyond it was a land of red hills and red trees, with another far-distant mountain shaped like a castle, and already darkening. We scrambled out of what in the rainy season must be a torrent two hundred yards wide, and slowly, and always slower, mounted towards the sapphire cliff. Just below the turret were hummocks, or perhaps trees. "Beyond those is Lalibela," said our men.

Three villages appeared on little hills sheeted with

briars and, by unspoken consent, we turned into a strip of plough below them. Here, where at least the land was shorn of its daggers, we pitched the tents before one of the sudden storms broke over us. The force of water on these occasions is so great that it beats everything flat, unless reinforced with double pegs and ropes.

On the fifth morning after leaving Debra Tabor, we started at five-thirty, determined to see Lalibela or die; rode grimly straight, oblivious of the paths which mocked us with their corkscrew twists; left the caravan far behind, climbed the last ridge on foot and, looking down the further side, saw, across a valley, the huts of our goal. They were massed on a splash of red sandstone with a few trees to emphasize the exceeding barrenness of the land around.

"Still hours away," moaned Hassen, but we found a path which curled and scrambled like a lizard, darting into gorges, whisking onto rocks, till, triumphantly, we scaled the last red ascent. At close quarters, the village spread over several hummocks, and numbered perhaps 500 *tukels*, but the famous troglodyte churches appear to be all carved out of the same central hill.

Past these we rode, with only a glimpse of carved roof level with the ground, and surrounded by a sunken court like a trench.

"There's not a blade of grass anywhere," I said. "If we don't want the *nagadis* to murder us we'd better hunt for barley."

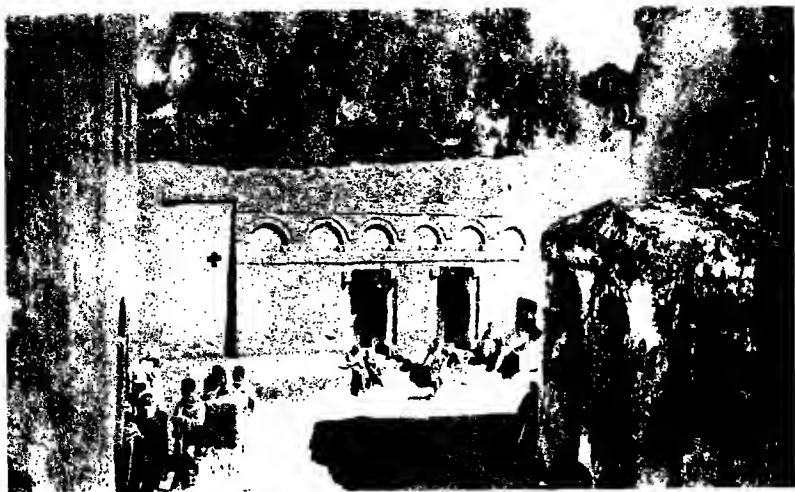
With this object we scoured each cluster of huts, but, as usual, the headman was away, and no one wished to sell more than a few eggs or a chicken. Finally, we found a person, who impressed by the bright blue of



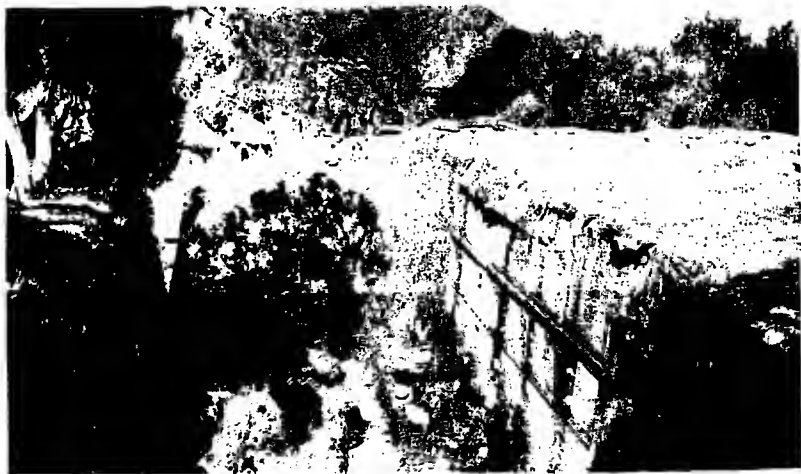
In a rock court at Iahbela



At Iahbela: rock tunnels leading from one building to another



Porch of Mariam, at Red Lalibela.



Looking down at rock-hewn Madane Alem from ground level.

the Itchegue's envelope—he could not read the address—took us to a two-storied hut where children, women and goats popped in and out of the upper story with the agility of squirrels. Amid a crowd of hot and greasy onlookers, a very black person studied our letters from all possible angles—preferably upside down—and assured us that when someone could be found to read them, barley would certainly result. Doubtfully we climbed a hill so barren that it looked as if it had been shaved, and sat down on the top to wait for the caravan.

After an hour we began to grow anxious. After two, a *zabanier*, very ragged and without *chamma* or rifle, raced up to us.

“There has been a fight. Their clothes are lost. Two men were drunk. Then there were four more,” translated Hassen incoherently, and plunged into violent argument with what appeared to be the last relic of our army. I remembered passing two horsemen who were so drunk that I had expected them momentarily to fall out of their saddles, and they had one or two of the usual armed riff-raff running after them.

By this time Hassen and the *zabanier* had become so excited that it looked as if at any minute they would be at each other's throats. Jones and I had each to seize one and shake him violently, before we could get any explanation of what had occurred. At last, by dint of repeated questions, punctuated by none too gentle shakes, we discovered that the *zabaniers* had laughed at the drunkards, whose retinue promptly attacked the scoffers. There was a general mêlée, in which rifles were used as clubs. Passing strangers joined in the fight without the faintest idea of its cause. Our men,

outnumbered, would have lost their guns which the other side regarded as justifiable loot, had not the *nagadis* come up at that moment and, armed with tent poles, joined in the fray.

"Well, what happened in the end?" I demanded, clinging to Hassen as if he were a firework which might go off at any moment.

"Still fighting," shouted both. "Far away! And all the Abyssinians are running to the place!"

There appeared to be no further reason for speech.

"Come along, Jones. We'll drop this man at the Chum's house to get help while we go and see what's up.

Woldo Selessi had already produced two horses, so bristling with extra revolvers, one of which we pressed on our groom, we prepared to lead a rescue expedition. The admiring gaze of some fifty small boys followed us to the cliff where the first mule of the clambering caravan met Jones so suddenly and unexpectedly that it almost knocked him out of the saddle!

The men, though draggled, were on the whole triumphant, for they had defeated a number of opponents, a number which increased with repetition, and the total loss was three *chammas* which had been torn off in the fray. Later on, when the usual afternoon rain began and developed into such a storm that neither ropes nor canvas stood the strain, and we had to lie on the ground in our flea-bags under collapsed tents, the clothesless ones began to wonder if the glory of victory were worth so much cold.

It was the worst night we had yet experienced, for, even in the tropics, I have never felt such force of water.

It was like a solid wall all round us, and no human being could stand against it. The canvas of tents and sleeping bags was soon soaked, and when, after what seemed an interminable period of crouching in wet darkness, the storm blew over, everything under the fallen poles was drenched, and we baled two inches of water off the ground sheets. The wind which had come to our rescue was almost more disastrous than the rain, for, though we managed to get the tents up in it, two or three rents were torn in the first hour, and Jones spent most of the night knocking in pegs. Having dried my stretcher as well as possible, and piled my notebooks and maps on it, I lay down on top of them, fully dressed and rolled in every piece of material I could find, including towels, but it was impossible to sleep, till the wind dropped just before dawn.

Consequently the morning found us tired and full of different aches. We despatched the caravan with the only man who would agree to attempt a straight cut to Gondar, and tramped down to the village, whose huts completely masked its subterranean treasures. On the way, we passed a boy who was running with head and shoulders bent, swaying in a curious fashion.

"Look out, he's blind!" I said, but Hassen retorted, "Drunk," till he grasped the meaning of the crowd which followed.

They remained at a respectful distance, eager to watch, but ready to scatter should the youth turn towards them.

"It is *libascia*," said Hassen, and began to explain in his usual muddled fashion, but I had read and heard so much of this once-popular method of capturing sup-

posed criminals, without the slightest hope of ever seeing it, that I did not wait to listen.

The boy was moving with the clumsy gait of a hyena, and his head swung between his shoulder-blades as he hesitated by the fence of a compound. His hands went out graspingly. Then with a catch of his breath that resembled a snarl, he turned and ran through the opening, brushing so close to me that I could see his mouth strained wide with a little foam at the corners. I should like to have followed, but a woman shrieked inside the *tukel*, and the crowd swept in like hounds on a hot scent.

"The thief is caught!" announced Woldo Gorgis with smug satisfaction. *Libascia* means the giving of a certain drug, I believe a combination of *kat*, hashish and herbs, to a virgin boy, who is then taken to the scene of the murder or theft. Charms or incantations are muttered over him while every witness fingers his amulets, and prays in audible apprehension. The youth under the power of the drug is then supposed to visualize the manner in which the crime was committed, and to be able to track the criminal, providing he has not crossed water, which breaks the spell. The boy of course knows what he has to do before he imbibes or inhales the concoction, and the knowledge must remain with him, at least subconsciously, to be responsible, probably, for many a miscarriage of justice. According to my priestly informant at Lalibela, the rite can only be performed once by the same youth. If he is a good subject, he will reproduce the actual gestures of the criminal and follow the exact route by which the escape was made, till, at last, breathing heavily and sweating, he will

grasp the accused's clothes and bury his face in them, moaning.

We could not wait to see the result of the medium's sudden plunge into the group of *tukels*, for we were bound on a visit to the multiple saints whose houses lie below the carpet of mushroom huts.

The rock churches of Lalibela have been visited by very few Western travellers, yet they undoubtedly rank among the world's greatest wonders and the legends of their miraculous construction, of the equally marvellous cures wrought by the little stream of Jordan which waters them, have made them throughout the ages a Mecca for African Christians. Father Alvarez, the Jesuit priest, who accompanied the Portuguese mission to Abyssinia in 1520-27, was probably the first European to see them and, after a meticulous description, he seems to realize how unlikely it was that the mediæval world would believe his tale of such incomparable marvels, for he adds, "It wearies me to write more of these works, because it seems to me that they will not believe me if I write more and because as to what I have already written they may accuse me of untruth, therefore I swear by God, in whose power I am, that all that is written is the truth, and there is much more than what I have written and I have left it that they may not tax me with falsehood."

For some three centuries after the Portuguese expedition Lalibela was forgotten by the West. Then the French Consul at Massawa, Achille Raffay, accompanied by Gabriel Simon, an ex-cavalry officer, penetrated the Lasta mountains and each left a record of the red city in books published in 1882 and 1885. The

famous German explorer, Rohlfs, followed them, but after this there were no more Occidental caravans till the French Minister at Addis Ababa, Monsieur de Coppet, and his wife passed through Lalibela on their way to Eritrea in 1923, followed by an American, Harlan, and later by Jones and myself.

The rock churches of Lalibela are generally attributed to a king of the same name who reigned at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century, but legend and the belief of priests and people accord them a date 700 years earlier. According to some authorities Lalibela had an Arab wife whom he married while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his return he brought with him several hundred Palestinian workmen, to whom he entrusted the construction of the rock churches, whose site had been revealed to him in a vision. The priests, however, possess manuscripts written in Geze and Arabic, mixed, which, if accurate, would show that troglodyte buildings of a much earlier date already existed at Lalibela.

In some accounts the 600 workmen were Egyptian not Arab, but all the local records agree that the labor of hewing the great monolith blocks out of the earth and the carving of windows, doors, arches, aisles and columns from solid rock, was too colossal for human efforts. So every night while sculptors and masons slept, a legion of angels took up their tools and continued the work through the darkness. Consequently every morning the workmen found some mighty column added to a façade or some new court begun. For years the hosts of heaven and the strangers from Nile or Jordan worked in turn. Thus by sunlight and by starlight

church after church grew to completion—monolith blocks, each carved out of a single mass of stone, not below, but level with the surface of the ground.

Each court is a great oblong pit some forty feet deep. In the centre is the church, its bulk of line giving it a stateliness emphasized by the bold simplicity of carving and ornament. The ground immediately around the churches is enclosed by a cone fence and the priests' huts creep right up to the edge of the sunken courts, which are sometimes joined one to the other by low tunnels, through which a man cannot walk upright. The natural walls between two such quarries are fifteen to thirty feet thick. Standing on the top of one, it is possible to get an impression of the labor expended on this labyrinth of excavated corridor and court, church, porch and colonnade and to compare the signs of different periods and schools of workmanship.

Achille Raffray, who had access to all the local records and could apparently translate them, attributes the construction of the Lalibela churches to the fifth century.

"The king who caused these churches to be built was the Negus Lalibela, the fifth Christian Negus and the third king, who reigned at Lalibela. The two first had reigned at Axum. Now, it was at the beginning of the fourth century that St. Frumentius had evangelized and Christianized Abyssinia, and Lalibela was the fifth Christian Negus. Reigns at that epoch were probably long; legend and the manuscript say that 100 years had passed for five sovereigns. Consequently this would put the erection of these monuments towards the beginning of the fifth century." *

* Translated from Raffray's "*Voyage en Abyssinie et au pays des Gallas—Rais.*"

Monsieur Raffray also states that the king employed four of five hundred *European* workmen and one of the old Ethiopian manuscripts states that the work was accomplished by *white* men. Another Ethiopian manuscript gives the following description of the King's work:

"Lalibela passed three days and three nights in ecstasy. The angel of God revealed to him the secret of the heavens. 'According to the will of God,' said he, 'go and build ten churches where sinners will find pardon.' He rose, reigned and built as the angel of God had shown him. From one stone he made first the house of Mariam, then Debra Sina with Golgotha on its right, the house of Meskal (the cross) on its left, the house of Medane Alem, the house of Danghel (the Virgins); the walls and columns are of stone. He built also the House of Gabriel and later the house of Libanos. Their wall is one. He built also the house of Mercury and afterwards the house of Emanuel and surrounded them with a wall. He built separately the house of George. He did nothing except in accordance with that which the Lord had shown him."

A manuscript still existing at Lalibela, which has one page, written in Greek, Arabic and Geze, giving the churches, the town and the surrounding territory to the monks in perpetuity, tells of the lineage and birth of Lalibela, who "reigned forty years. His nourishment was Zengada and three mouthfuls of Onet—he never had a fourth. At seven years of age he knew how to read without fault; ten years after his coronation he built eleven churches. He accomplished one trench by day and the angels made four for him by night. He arrived at the age of seventy years and finished his building in twenty-three years."

Yet another record runs—

“On the 17th June, the blessed, unspotted contemplator of the Heavenly mysteries, Lalibela, Emperor of Ethiopia, went to rest. When this saint was born, his parents educated him in the fear of God and when he was grown up a youth, the Emperor his brother was told that he should possess his empire and sit upon his throne, whereupon he grew envious, sent for him and ordered him to be whipped, but the stripes did not touch him, the Angel of the Lord delivering him, which angel revealed to him that he should build ten churches and when he had done building them he should rest in peace.”

Salt gives the date 1095 for the construction of the main churches, and Simon, who accompanied Raffray's expedition, sharing with him the honor of being the first European since the sixteenth century. Alvarez to see Lalibela, suggests that the work was perhaps begun by Byzantines in the fifth century, continued by Arab artists during the seventh and eighth centuries and terminated in the twelfth by King Lalibela.

The churches are divided into two distinct groups. The first contains those of Mary, the Virgin, Medane Alem (Saviour of the world), Maskal (the cross), Golgotha and Mikael, the two latter being carved in the same rock. The second group contains Gabriel, Libanos, Mercurios or Marcoyos and Emanuel. St. George (or Lalibela) stands alone.

There exists an Arab manuscript telling of Imam Ahmed's campaigns against Christian Abyssinia, in which occurs the following passage concerning Lalibela:

“Ahmed afterwards made preparations to advance into Tigre. . . . Then he learned that the idolators had assembled

near the church called Lalibela. He marched against them across mountains and by a very difficult road during continuous rain: his men died of cold. They reached the church, where the monks were collected to die in its defence. The Imam examined the church and found that he had never seen the like. It was cut from the rock, as were the columns that supported it. There was not a piece of wood in all the construction save the idols in their shrines. There was also a cistern hewn out of the rock. The Imam called together the monks and ordered them to collect and bring wood. They lighted a fire, and, when the fire was hot, Ahmed said to them, 'Now, let one of you and one of us enter,' wishing to see what they would do and to test them. Then their chief said, 'Willingly I will go in,' but a woman who had adopted the religious life arose and said, 'It is he who expounds to us the Gospel. Shall he die here before my eyes?' and threw herself into the fire. The Imam cried, 'Drag her out.' They dragged her out, but part of her face was burned. Then he burned their shrines, broke their stone idols and took all the gold plates and silk textures he found."

The Moslem conqueror imbued with the hatred of all carven images inherited from his Prophet, puritan and iconoclast, must have overlooked the statues in Golgotha (or Lalibela), for these can hardly have been added later. Father Alvarez's description of Golgotha, which church contains the tomb of King Lalibela, is still the best we have.

"It is 120 spans in length and 72 spans in width. The ceiling rests on five supports, two on each side and one in the centre. The gallery which goes round the church is like a cloister and lower than the body of the church and one goes down from the church to this gallery. There are three windows on each side

and, if one looks (presumably from outside) through each of these windows which is opposite the sun, one sees the tomb at the right of the high altar. In the centre of the body of the church is the sign of a door like a trap-door, it is covered up with a large stone like an altar stone. They say that this is the entrance to the lower chamber and that no one enters there, nor does it appear that that stone or door can be raised. This stone and a hole in the centre which pierces it through.*

"All the pilgrims put their hands into this stone and say that many miracles are done there."

There is a second tomb in this church, which is variously said to be a copy of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and the tomb of Adam. The dark vaults and passages below this and other churches are known as "hell," and it is said that only the faithful can lift the great stones which close them. The tomb of Lalibela was draped, when we were there, with a red and white cloth, as it was too sacred to be seen. Mr. Harlan speaks of a column being covered in the same way and for the same reason.

Father Alvarez continues—

"Two great images were carved into the wall itself, which remain in a manner separated from it. They showed me these things as though I should be amazed at seeing them. One of the images is St. Peter, the other St. John: they give them great reverence."

There are two chapels attached to the church of Golgotha, one almost square with three aisles, the other shaped somewhat like a Gothic baptistry, and besides

* This hole is about one foot across.

the square windows, there are in the walls a number of holes blocked with stones which may have been tombs.

Gorgis, or Lalibela, is perhaps the most interesting church, for it is built in the form of a Maltese Cross, one side joined to the earth, with which its roof, ornamented with a double cross, is level. In the trough by which we went down to the sanctuary are certain scars on the rock face which are supposed to be the hoof-prints of St. George's horse. Legend says that the Warrior Saint was wrathful at his omission from the list of patrons of the newly excavated Lalibela churches, so mounting his fire-shod steed, he rode down from heaven vowing vengeance, but was placated by the promise of a habitation more beautiful than any of the others. I also heard the hoof-marks attributed to Lalibela's horse, as he rode round overseeing the work, which is more logical since they are on the inside of an already cut trough.

The "house of George" is entered by way of an underground chamber which serves as a vestry for its priests. We went up a flight of steps, through a rock portal into a room hung with sacred pictures painted on white cotton stuff and out again into a small quarry shaped like a cross. On one side some six feet from the ground in a hollow in the wall is a small carved tank full of water, which is said to come from some hidden spring. It percolates very slowly, probably from some underground tributary of the Jordan, which, flowing round and under Lalibela has, in certain places seeped away the rock and perhaps facilitated the work of excavation. The water of this stream is supposed to

cure most mortal ills and baptism in it is as much coveted as in the real Jordan.

The name has led to some confusion, for one writer, told that the pools of Mariam contained "Jordan water," attributed it to the Palestinian river.

The court round St. George is full of tombs, and I imagine that all the holes in the rock, half blocked with stones, which are seen all over Lalibela, are burial places, for the city is regarded as holy and interment within its bounds a sure road to paradise. Simon writes of dried corpses in the crypts which are wrapped in ox hides or tied up in hollow tree-trunks.

The arched doorway leading into the church of George is beautifully carved and the windows are the most original in Lalibela, for they show the Greek cross and the Moslem crescent. The interior which is some forty feet in diameter is decorated with statues carved in high relief on the walls, but not separated from them. There are ten of these figures, representing saints and sinners, chief among the latter being a young man afflicted by a horrible disease because he refused to marry at his father's command.

The two finest churches are, I think, the colossal Medane Alem and Mariam, separated only by a great bastion which is pierced by one of the tunnels which look like rabbit holes. The base of the first, which projects a few feet beyond its walls, is roughly thirty-eight yards long and twenty-seven broad, while the subterranean court in which it stands is forty-five yards long and proportionately wide. The priests told us that there were originally seventy-two columns in and around this church, but many have been broken. There is still

a colonnade of mighty blocks at the eastern façade, and a few remain at one end of the southern. Inside there is first an ante-chamber like a broad passage with a second door which opens onto the central of five aisles. These are divided by twelve pillars, massive and square, supporting round arches, some of which are decorated with a round carved plaque. There is no central tabernacle, as in most Abyssinian churches, but what would, in Europe, be the choir, is walled off between the four additional columns of the side aisles, and a curtain hangs across the central space. The priests would not allow this to be lifted, but, above it, we could see the capitals of another quartette of pillars and the corresponding round arches which support the roof. This is carved on the outside in a manner which suggests growing, and the small irregular windows are wrought in simple designs, such as a Maltese Cross, a St. Andrew's cross (like an X), and a Swastika.

With a lack of logic truly Abyssinian, only men are allowed to enter Mariam, the church of the Virgin.

"Why do you exclude women from the one church dedicated to a woman?" I asked the chief priest, who was attended by an acolyte with a fly whisk.

"It is the rule," he said.

"What would happen if Mary appeared on earth and wanted to enter her own house?"

The man of learning laughed. "That is a very good joke! We should know her of course," they answered with the simplicity of children.

The house of Mariam has three porches, standing out from the main block, and it is much smaller, not only than its neighbor Medane Alem, but in proportion to the

size of its court, which contains two sunken pools, and the remains, or perhaps the beginning, of a font or pulpit. The northern wall is beautifully decorated with a design of round arches in low relief, and, beyond it, is a sort of storehouse or enclosed cloister which was probably intended for another church.

On the further side of Lalibela there is another group of churches, Emanuel, Marcoyos, and Gabriel. These are all hewn out of the same hill, and the first glimpse of them is a stupendous round bastion encircled by a trench forty or fifty feet deep, with a corresponding outer wall. Down into this trough we clambered and then through a hole which seemed to have been blasted or torn out of the twenty-eight feet thick rampart, or perhaps it was worn into its present irregular ledges by the feet of countless worshippers. By this tunnel we mounted, twisting, into a court some thirty yards long, with the church of Emanuel on a central pediment nineteen yards by thirteen. The interior was divided, as are the modern churches, into an outer corridor or aisle, and a holy of holies between four square columns, supporting round arches just below the roof and another set of pillars were carved into the walls.

"The house of Marcoyos is underneath," explained a friendly priest and, seizing my hand, he led me into the darkest corner, and fumbling on the ground, I suppose he pulled up a stone, for, in a moment, all but his head and shoulders had disappeared.

"This is the way. Come and visit Marcoyos," he urged, but I hung back till a tallow taper was produced.

Then, gingerly, we felt our way, step by irregular step, down some twelve feet perhaps, into a subterra-

nean passage, the height of a tall man, and wide enough for two to walk abreast.

The floor was rough, and the light was insufficient to see more than that the walls were smooth, and bare of decoration. A crowd followed us into the confined space, and the echoes of their voices boomed as if we were shut into a drum. Once the taper went out, and the crush, smell and curious, throbbing echo in the blackness were sufficiently unpleasant to make me thankful when someone dragged me forward, apparently over various unprotecting bodies. Round a corner I was pulled and up towards a gleam of light, which revealed quantities of bare legs. A moment more and I had stumbled to a level with their bodies. We were in the portico of Marcayos, roughly hollowed out of the rock face. Here there was no court or carving, but just a few simple arches hewn out under the earth. Others divided the cave into two lateral aisles, so that this was actually a troglodyte church, penetrating twenty or thirty feet under the surface, its roof a few yards below it. Light came through gaps in the front where the spaces between the arches were filled with painted cloths and, in some places, the overhanging earth was propped with mud bricks.

Beyond Marcayos we climbed a rampart crowned with olives and long grass. From this we had a sudden exquisite view across one of the maze of trenches, and a further flower-sprinkled wall. In a small pit a priest sat pounding grain as golden as the great vellum missal that lay beside him. One side of this primitive court was sheer red rock, hewn into a doorway, massive and stately. Its plinths and lintel were as solid as the steps

.



Entering troglodyte, Lalibela



Typical Abyssinian beggar



Zos rock. Cross marks entrance to underground Church of Gorgis



A well in a dry river bed.

which led up to it, and there primeval simplicity seemed to be more in keeping with the mountains and the gnarled ancient olives than the complex carvings which pierced the equally sheer front of the neighboring church, Libanos.

My impression is that, though the front of this building, which opened into a trough full of weeds and stones, was considerably damaged, the interior was the most elaborate in Lalibela. It was small, and the door was so low and narrow that it ought to have belonged to a doll's house, but the capitals of the square pillars showed elliptical designs, and above them there was a sort of frieze in bold relief, with jutting buttresses. We did not see the other churches for, after watching our enthusiasm for hot hours, after clambering rock bastions, and scrambling through a warren of tunnels, the priests intimated that they considered such interest should produce something more tangible than photographs!

We left Hassen to satisfy their material needs, and rode up the hill amidst a few hundred devotees carrying canes instead of rifles, and intent on our biography. Were we Greeks or Armenians, they asked? When told we were English, they seemed puzzled.

"There is no difference, they are just the same," muttered an ancient of days whom time had frozen into grey immobility. It appeared that he had never left Lalibela, and we were the first English he had seen. "No difference!" he continued muttering discontentedly till we were out of hearing!

The Portuguese Father Alvarez, the first European to see the famous churches of Lalibela, wrote of them,

in the sixteenth century. "Neither a jeweller in silver nor a worker in wax could do more work."

To me the chief impression beyond the bulk of the monolith blocks, for the cave churches are less interesting and reminiscent of rose-red Petra in the Hedjaz, is the squareness of every detail. With the exception of the arches and the almost imperceptible downward curve of the roof edges, everything is hewn with uncompromising angularity. If the line of beauty is a curve, Lalibela is not beautiful, for court, pediments and churches, sunken water tanks, windows and the geometrical designs of their frames, columns, capitals, and porches are square or oblong. There is nothing round except arches, roofs and some of the outer trenches encircling the huge rock bluffs which contain the houses of God's saints. As soon as men or angels touched the stone, they wrought it into sharp corners, and a sturdy definiteness of line foreign to the earth out of whose breast they cut it, but in keeping with the tabular ridges, cones and buttresses, result of volcanic upheaval in this land of ancient violence.

Above the round slope of Lalibela towers such a monument, chiseled by nature into rampart and altar, which may well have served as model for the equally bold fortress-churches under its shadow. I looked back at this cliff as we passed the heaps of stones, strewn with branches, denoting the limit of holy ground.

"A landmark for days." "We shall need it," said Jones, who was doubtful whether a map which was unpromisingly blank where we most needed its help, a compass, and a guide full of charm but evasive as to names and distances, were sufficient to get us across 140

miles of officially routeless mountain and valley to Gondar.

"I could not bear to go back to Debra Tabor," I urged. "Its a certain nine days that way, whereas this——"

"May be twenty," muttered Hassen. "The last man in the village says so."

"Only because he wanted more money!" I insisted. "In any case its a new way and full of possibilities!"

"You love new things, don't you?" said Jones. "Well, I hope my tobacco will last out, and what exactly are the possibilities of getting anywhere to-night?"

"Oh, to-day is dull—there is a track marked as far as Dembeta Mariam. Does the guide happen to know it?"

I had to confess that the good-looking Woldo Sabat had seemed doubtful as to which of the many ridges served as footstool for this particular house of Mary, but the youth who was to guide us till we caught up the caravan, showed no hesitation. Goatlike, he balanced on the precipitous slides, faintly scarred with tracks large enough for a good-sized serpent. My white horse, cured of any desire to show off, but clumsily afraid of the knife edges, lumbered after him, head turned to safety, quarters perilously sidling. I ought to have dismounted, but I was tired after the night's violence, and the sun was scorching through my thin felt hat, so I risked just one more corkscrew spiral. Some pebbles slipped from under the stallion's hoofs. Stumbling, he swung sideways and his hind legs went over. There was a snort from the terrified beast, a chorus of screams behind me, and a heaving slide. I didn't wait to swing

my leg over, but kicking free of the stirrups, rolled off on my left shoulder. Mercifully the reins stayed in my hand, so, though there was a moment when the front hoofs and my head seemed inextricably mixed, and another when I was nearly dragged over on top of the furiously struggling animal, in the end his forelegs found some grip and a combined hauling on the bridle added the necessary help. With a final heave and a squeal, the horse stood trembling on the path, but it was several minutes before we could get him to move on. Thereafter, his terror of cliffs made him a danger to the whole caravan, for he always wanted to walk along them crab-fashion, feeling, apparently, that, as long as he could not see the drop, his huge quarters might lumber where they liked!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DANGERS OF A "SHORT CUT."

ALL that day we hurried after the *nagadi*, but he had fitted his mules with seven leagued boots so that every one we met assured us: "Au. I have seen him—far, very far in front." The country alternated between rock and scrub with no stretch flat enough to plough. We hurried through a blazing hot noon, striped with the flash of hoopoes' wings or the gleam of golden orioles. The sunset came as, breathless and parched, we attacked an immense ridge which seemed to tear the sky with its palisade of thorns.

"There is a village half-way up," said our boy guide. "The *nagadi* will never pass that." But he did! The twilight saw a chase, grim now, lest darkness catch us on the rocks. Jones's mule gave out half a mile before the summit. I pushed mine ahead.

"If there is no flat space on top, we're done," I said. "Heaven knows where he'll have gone to; in any case, it'll be too dark to follow."

With bursting sides, my mule heaved himself over the last boulders.

"Jones!" I shrieked. "It's all right. I've seen a dog's tail!"

The next moment I saw the whole animal, which, obviously guardian of a village, turned to bark at me. A hundred yards away were three clusters of huts and, in

a hollow between them, our tents were already going up.

"You told me to go to Dembeta," said the *nagadi* triumphantly. "I remembered the name, so I came here!"

Of course the Chum was away. The headmen of Northern Abyssinia seem gifted with a sixth sense which warns them of the approach of any traveler, having the right of "dergo," and they go to ground like rabbits.

"Where is his house?" we demanded.

"Oh, very far away!"

"His deputy then?"

"He has gone on a long journey," or "he is in Addis Ababa," are the two regular answers to the last question, but Dembeta wanted to make sure.

"Dead," they said blandly.

"Well, will you sell us a little barley?"

This they were reluctant to do, knowing that they should have given it as tax, but after an hour's arguing and several journeys to the various hovels, we collected a sackful of different grains. A widow, with head so closely shaven that it made one ache to look at it, sold us a chicken the size of a starling for a bullet.

"She oughtn't to lose all hope of another husband," snorted Gabra Gorgis after he had exhausted his contempt for such sharp practice. It is only the old women wrinkled into pleated bags, who shave their hair as a sign of mourning, for husbands are easily replaced in Abyssinia, where most women have made trial of several.

The next day, after we had been about an hour on

the way, our visit was reported to the local *Dejezmatch*, who sent soldiers after us to apologize for the villagers' behavior, and to invite us to spend the night on his own property.

"So great a lady ought not to travel fast."

The slogan of Ethiopia was repeated, but, determined to vindicate my short cut, I returned thanks and regrets, and hurried on the caravan. We camped at Berkwakwa Mariam, after a contest with thorns had forced us from our saddles, and a mule had stood on my foot with such force that a toe was reduced to black pulp. I did not like either the look or the feel of it, but Jones, having successfully extracted one of Hassen's teeth with a pair of pliers, was quite sure that he could amputate a mere toe with a pocket-knife!

Berkwakwa Mariam, like all these northern villages, is called by the name of its church. On every hill platform there are a few huts and a bunch of trees. Asked for information, guide or local passer-by will name the church "Mary" or "George" or "The Trinity," but, pressed for the name of the village, he will reply, "I don't know" or "I have forgotten. It is unimportant."

All Abyssinia is priest-ridden, but, in the north, I should think half the inhabitants are religious, and all the villages are ruled by priests. The Christianity of peasant Ethiopia is very curious, for it is a dogma, not a code. It is superstitious, fanatical of religious observance, so that no man will eat the bread allowed in fast time, if you hand it to him with fingers which have recently touched meat, nor will he pass a church wall without kissing it, but his creed sets no standard of conduct. As a matter of course he is dirty. He will get drunk,

lie, cheat, and set no value on his word. He will also steal, except, I think, from his own employer. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say he will only steal trifles from his master! He is not so much immoral, as paganly unmoral in his dealings with women, among whom virtue is of little account, even before marriage. This, I suppose, is partly due to the promiscuity and squalor of the family hut.

There is little to choose between Arabs and Abyssinians with regard to morals, except that the former obeys the letter of his law, whereas the Abyssinian does not. On the other hand, the desert Arab is clean, loyal to his word and to his guest, fearless and generous to make up for his cruelty. His faith is the very core of his being. Five times a day he prays, whether in his village or alone with his camel in the sands, and his life has the hard simplicity of the God who is omnipresent to him. I have always thought it would be impossible to be an atheist in the desert. A cynic answered me, "Equally impossible to be a believer in Abyssinia." I think perhaps that, just as the boundless deserts give some of their greatness to the men who live in them, so the mountains narrow a man's outlook, shut him into a small world full of small interests. The eyes of the Abyssinian mountaineer are dull. You never see in them that splendid isolation, born of loneliness and a hundred-mile horizon. There is no mountain wisdom among them, as there is desert wisdom among the Arabs. They are enemies of their rocks and crags, and frightened of them, whereas the Bedouin is kin to his sands and friendly to all their moods. The difference may be due to the fact that the peasant Abyssinian is no traveler. A jour-

ney is a thief-haunted terror, and two days' away is "far country," nameless, and without interest. For the desert Arab, there are only two subjects of conversation, routes and wells. The Abyssinian talks food, money and robbers. Water to him seems to be as unimportant as it is vital to the Arab, who must perform the prescribed number of daily ablutions in sand if there is no well at hand.

The villagers of Ethiopia can hardly be blamed for the filth of their houses and the color of their garments, which gradually tones with their own, since they build their huts so far from the nearest stream or water-hole. This is in many cases essential, since the river beds are barren and unhealthy, fit only for baboons, mosquitoes and brigands, but in the north the highest cones are generally chosen, because they are the easiest to defend in case of war or raid.

Berkwakwa was provided with a very muddy source insufficient to more than water our mules and supply us with a few cupfuls of what I thought was coffee till Balaina, almost weeping, assured me it was "water—most extremely new and clean."

The priestly headman came to see us in mud-colored shifts and capes, as dirty as their flocks, but very courteous and kind. One brought us an excited chicken, which promptly escaped, and the whole camp spent a happy five minutes chasing it. The Abyssinian is a sportsman in delightful boyish fashion, and he can't resist hunting anything from a caravan of monkeys to one's squawking run-away supper. He must shoot at the longest range with his last bullet, which might buy him bread or *talla*, at anything from gazelle to vulture,

leopard to hawk, but I confess I have never seen him hit anything! They are curious in that they do not seem to be specialists at their own job. Undoubtedly they are fighters, yet, on the march, one *zabanier* will be carrying an unloaded rifle and another, half a mile behind, all the ammunition for it. The *nagadis* are, for long periods, tent dwellers, yet they do not know how to put in pegs—you will always find these slanting inwards, so that any strain pulls them out. In loading, they will not sufficiently weigh the different items, so that, though they get off quicker the first day than any Arab caravan I have seen, where three or four hours are always spent arranging the preliminary loads, they have to readjust each piece of baggage a dozen times on the way. To the Arab, each of his camels is a personal friend. To the Abyssinian *nagadis* I met, each of their mules was a personal enemy!

Berkwakwa sent us on our way with grave warnings of robbers. As we passed the next "House of Christians" I forget whether it was Mary or George—two ill-conditioned creatures, armed with rifles, pattered after us.

"We have come to save you from the brigands on this bad road," they said. "There is a band near the Takkazyé river who have seventy-two rifles."

Jones removed his pipe with an air of meditation.

"I should think if we take these fellows along, they'll have seventy-four," he said.

Agreeing, I got rid of our proposed defenders by the simple expedient of telling them I had no money with me.

We met no robbers, but my impressions of that red-

hot day were mountains of loose stones, pinned together with thorns. Jones expressed it more succinctly in one word, "Hell." Under a torrid sun, we labored, with automatic regularity, down one wracking chute of stones and up another. I could not walk, because of my pulpy toe, and not only my boots, which the cobbler *sabanier* had mended by combining two pairs into one, with a result that was uncomfortably small, till both split up the back, but the pommel of the saddle and the reins were not to touch. The thorns were a curtain a foot or two above saddle level, so I was continually bent double over the mule's neck in a futile attempt to avoid the prongs. After eight hours of this, every muscle in my back was jarred, my knees skinned by the trunks between which my mount pushed, while, with arms up, I tried blindly to defend my head, and there was a sharp particular pain which came with every downward jerk of the beast's quarters, which, by this time, seemed to have no connection with the rest of it. My leather coat gave at last. My gloves had become mittens. My hat was torn across the crown and the handkerchief I had stuck under it as some protection against the sun, was a fringe, while breeches and boot seams were like a pin cushion. Eyes seared, caked with dust and sweat, we came to a piece of flat mud with a few houses above it. I looked round for a clean spot, saw none, so lay down where there were fewest stones and was conscious of nothing but a fusion of different aches, till the first mules of the caravan walked over me. They looked like the scarred and battered veterans of some battlefield, and there was no piece of luggage intact except Jones' film cases. The flea-bags were ripped at the ends. The sacks

which held the tents gaped as if after a careless operation. One suit case was smashed, the lock of another gone, while the cover of the medicine chest was in tatters, and the cook's boxes a collection of strips barely held together with rope.

The retinue needed almost as much mending as the luggage and, once again, we washed, anointed, and tied up, and ministered to aches in altogether too much shaken middles. Then Jones mended the worst tear in his tent with a cross of sticking plaster, Hassen pulled thorns out of every one with my pincers. Gabra Gorgis turned several boxes into one, the cobbler exhausted his thread on the least damaged cases and covers, the stocks of our pagoda umbrellas were repaired with splints made of pencils, my watch glass and Jones's sun-glasses decorated with some sticking paper, and most of the glass picked out of the purée of jam, coffee and powdered macaroni.

There was a full moon that night. All the hills were sapphires set in silver, till flame scarred the blueness with point after rippling point. First there was a scarlet pagoda outlined on a distant mountain. Then the lines blurred into a great beacon which blazed half the night, and challenged the white heat of the moonlight.

The peasants were burning the scrub to enrich the land which yielded them so poor return, but Woldo Gorgis, his head full of robbers, insisted that it was a signal. We took council of the *nagadis*, for Atto Belacho was hard-headed.

"There certainly are robbers," he said. "And the caravan should keep together. They will not attack

it, if they see Europeans with it, for they know the government would make a war."

"They will not wait to find out," said Atto Daiwitu cheerfully, "for no Europeans come this road, so let us make ready."

We did so by loading extra revolvers for ourselves, by arming the groom and Balaina with the remainder, with instructions not to shoot at anything but a hall-marked brigand, and by insisting that all rifles should be loaded and carried by the men who had the ammunition. In the morning, every one looked like a wild west show at Olympia.

"How do you feel?" asked Jones, as I hobbled out of my tent.

I thought for a minute, as I chose the least damaged egg and encouraged a five-inch locust, with red wings, to get out of the honey.

"The shreds of my last stockings are knotted round my feet, and I feel like an ant crawling out of a dynamo."

"As bad as that. I had to shout three times before I could wake you this morning. By the way, Hassen doesn't want to carry a revolver—he says it might 'act' in his pocket."

"He'd certainly fall off if anything 'acted' within a mile of him," I said bitterly—the locust had left bits of himself in the last of the honey and the saddle-cloth that for weeks had interposed its wadding between my bones and the hardness of my Abyssinian saddle, was a shredded mass.

While I was studying the effect of Gabra Gorgis's patchwork boxes, from which handles and spouts pro-

truded in unexpected places, a crowd gathered in search of medicine. They brought a little milk in gourds, apologizing for the meager supply because the land was dry, and they exposed leprous sores, a child with two small bones sticking out of the back of its head, and other worse things. It struck me that the dryness of which they complained, acting as cautery and disinfectant combined, was more useful than amateur doctoring was likely to be.

"Does it hurt much?" I asked the boy with the exposed skull.

"Not when the moon is full," answered his mother. "But when there is a young moon, it itches."

The others agreed that at the beginning or end of the lunar month their sufferings increased. There was one funny case of a small imp with a pain in his middle, for which I was about to administer the obvious remedy, when his older brother explained that he had caught a young bird and eaten it alive.

"He did not chew it properly," he said, moving his jaws expressively, "and the creature is still alive inside him. It is the beak he feels tapping."

We agreed that this was most unfortunate, and Has-sen delivered a lecture, not on cruelty, but on economy, since young partridge can be encouraged to grow into large fat ones, if not prematurely devoured.

Slowly we left Kwa Amba and toiled down towards the old, elusive Takkazy, which hid its ribbon of water far down between cliffs and twisted thorn thickets. It was a terrible land, older in its parched grayness than anything I have seen except the gum bush in Australia. Rocks and strange shriveled trees looked as if they were

the rags of time, wrung in the mangle of drought, shrunk and discolored by the sun. The grass was colorless, and the whole country sapless and bleached. The trees, bent and groping towards the earth with a mass of tortured tendons, might have provided the inspiration for one of those wonderful, gnarled drawings of Rackham's. The people, as bloodless and wrinkled as the rocks which burned the cracked leather of their skins, were scantily wrapped in hides. Hair, faces, eyes had a curiously leaden look, by reason of the dust which caked them. We sat on a rock that must have been the lid of some infernal oven, and ate a chicken wing which in texture and taste resembled dry bark, and we noticed that every one of our nails was split.

Then, having been defeated in a contest with the catgut legs of the bird, we shepherded the caravan down the last rocky chute, pulled thorns out of every one and suggested an immediate crossing of the deliciously cool, green water. There arose a chorus of protest from Woldo Sambat, shrieks, expostulations from Gabra Gorgis, and an interested hub-bub from the rest. The guide had seized a fowl, tied comfortably in the hollow between two film cases, which represented the certainty of supper should we find no village on our way. He wrenched it free and was just going to throw it into the river, when I seized his arm.

"Has he gone mad?" I asked Hassen.

"No, no," muttered our so-called interpreter. "He must drown it." And with no further explanation he got so mixed up in the verbal battle that I had to appeal to Gabra Gorgis. From him I learned that it was a custom when crossing the Takkazye to sacrifice a chick-

en either to the ancient flood gods, or perhaps to the crocodiles.

"But there's hardly enough water to cover a trout, let alone anything dangerous," I protested. "You don't want to sacrifice my dinner each time I wade through a puddle."

Gabra Gorgis was doubtful. He shrugged his shoulders and spoke of "these ignorant people", but was obviously relieved when, as the sole method of inducing Woldo Sambat to proceed, I agreed to give up the fowl on condition that it was killed before it was thrown into the water. There was another babel of discussion over this, but I remained obstinate, so, with mutterings concerning "bad luck", and invocations of Christian saints, a dead bird was devoted to a rite, pagan as the superstition on which it was based.

For a mile we strayed up the river bed, crossing and recrossing the shrunken water, till a tributary, the Tekhen, branched off northwest. Up this marched Woldo Sambat, in spite of the protests of the exasperated *nagadis*, whose feet ached for any sort of hill track, rather than the smooth slippery stones, slime-covered, of this once-waterway. For two hours we panted through the dank, breathless heat, making such slow progress over the round stones that it seemed we slipped back two steps for every one we took. Then, most fortunately, the guide lost, not the way, but his head, for the course took a turn southward and, in a panic, he declared we should soon find ourselves back at Debra Tabor. Solemnly I agreed, drew out a map which was discreetly non-committal on the wanderings of the Tekhen and, after apparent consideration, an-



Entering court of Gondar Palace.



Fasil's palaces at Gondar.



The "House of Many Loves" at Gondar



Film cases as a table. In camp at Gondar

nounced that the first hill path on the right would lead us to Kwalissa. It did, and we camped under a few huts girdled with trees that looked as if they bore little gray bottle-brushes, soft and furry, instead of flowers.

Since the storm at Lalibela the nights had been almost as hot as the days, and a full moon drenched them with white magic. The world was strung so taut in the stillness, that the cricket's song pulsed like the keynote, to which it is said every human body must respond at breaking-point. Nobody slept, and everybody suffered from neuralgia.

The fifth day from Lalibela began well, for the track, officially non-existent, as if to show its scorn of red dashes on a map, ran out of the thorns and widened into a two-foot path.

"At this rate we shall get to Zos Gorgis early, and I can have a wash," said Jones, who still dreamed of pitching camp beside a real river with water in it, not stones and cattle dung. From Dembeta we had first seen, far away to the northwest, the great square table of Zos with its suitably attendant rock, shaped like a cottage loaf. Now the cliff had an amethyst table-cloth, and there was a whole row of cottage-loaf peaks stretching along the range which we must cross on our way to Gondar.

"So far the short cut has been successful," I said.

"Um. Yes," agreed Jones, who had spent hours extracting seven different varieties of thorns from various limbs.

"The mules are all lame, we haven't got a single undamaged piece of luggage, and as for our clothes——"

He paused and his eyes dwelt on my knees protruding bare and bruised from the latest tear.

I was glad that Woldo Sambat chose this moment to dive down into one of the dry water-courses, for which he had such an inexplicable passion. As it ran directly south, we protested, and urged our guide on to a broad path which appeared to lead direct to Zos. Miserably, he trailed along it, but, after less than a mile, his face brightened and, deaf to all appeals, he swung round the side of a hill on a thread of trampled dust that compared ill with our "road."

"It goes round. Tamallas! Tamallas!"

It was the first time I heard that horrible word, which thereafter, haunted us for days. It means "twist" or "turn back", and Woldo Sambat used it correctly, for his track was as supple as an eel, and quite as elusive. Whenever I pointed out a straighter and a broader way, he assured me that it only went to the nearest village.

"He has a crooked mind," I said.

"Or a left-hand complex," suggested Jones.

Hassen proffered the correct explanation when the sun was slipping behind the hills and we were lost in a whirl of round-backed hills, each just enough higher than the preceding one to shut out all hope of a view.

"He don't know any straight roads," announced the interpreter. "He only knows long ways by river beds and rocks, and they don't go near any villages."

"But why, why?" I expostulated.

"Because, seven years ago, he sell slaves by these hidden ways. When he catch them, he have to be careful and take them along rivers and under bushes, far away

from villages, where policemen catch him and put him in prison."

So our handsome guide was an ex-slave trader, who had been obliged to give up his profitable business when the law against such trafficking came into force, but his knowledge of by-ways, suitable for cowed and unprotected serfs, involved him in acrimonious disputes with the whole caravan. Amidst the clamor of sixteen discordant voices, we approached another river bed. To avoid it, Jones and I hurried ahead with Hassen, climbed the twentieth or thirtieth of the slopes carpeted with thorns and spiked grass, and sat down below the twenty-first or thirty-first, to wait for the caravan. It did not come.

"They are amusing themselves in the river," said Jones, and began on his pet subject—washing.

"In three days we may be at Gondar. I daresay you can get some water there," I replied crossly.

Then Woldo Selessi arrived breathless and poured out a wonderful tale.

"There are robbers by the river. The mules were looking between the stones for a little water and men rushed from the bushes, seized them, and tried to drag them away."

The thought of any one pulling, pushing, or otherwise inducing the *nagadis's* mules to move in any direction but the one they desired, struck me as humorous, but I interposed.

"You had five rifles with you. Did it occur to you to use them?"

Woldo Selessi laughed. At first, apparently, there had been a tug of war between the *nagadis* and the

would-be thieves, while, as the groom put it, "we talked to them to stop them!" Then when the mules, objecting to the part of bone between two dogs, began to kick every one indiscriminately, it dawned on the gesticulating *zabaniers* that their rifles were on their backs. At the first shot, the robbers fled for the bushes, and, triumphantly, the caravan congratulated itself and the saints it preferred, on its victory. That abortive and chiefly vocal effort was the utmost of which those brigands were capable, for, though we hurried on another few miles and camped in a strategic position combining the maximum of discomfort with the command of all approaches, we remained untroubled. Hassen, as usual, provided a touch of humor, for, when we sent him to buy fodder at the nearest huts, he took with him every rifle the caravan possessed except one which had jammed, owing to a surfeit of cartridges having been forced into its magazine. The interpreter returned just as Jones had succeeded in partially unloading this gorged weapon. Waving a chicken by its legs, Hassen gave a graphic description of the perils of obtaining it. As he grew interested in his tale, he picked up the rifle and lent on it casually, his thumb on the barrel, chin resting above it, and one leg pressing the trigger.

"Take care!" said Jones. "That gun might 'act,' you know."

Hassen looked surprised. "Oh, no!" he said. "It is not of the same nature as your pistols!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PALACES OF GONDAR.

THERE was an air of doubt around our departure next morning. The guide plunged left handed into a thicket which branded us afresh. A small boy rescued us and set us on what he assured us was the "head road" for Zos Gorgis. After a mile this trail lost itself in green bushes with most deceptive self-colored spikes. For some time we struggled through a maze of scrub, the guide smiling but entirely vague. Then Jones and I alternately discovered tracks which lost us a little more hopelessly. After two hours, three or four of us were climbing straight up the mountain side, dragging our mules after us. From the midst of the speared thicket below came a despairing chorus of whistling and shouting.

"The luggage is divided into three parties," translated Hassen. "Atto Belacho is lost with one. A mule is missing. The man who went to find it is also lost. They are all lost."

The chorus of complaints and appeals certainly came from half a dozen different places and some were very far away.

Jones and I looked at each other guiltily.

"They'll never get up here. It's downright impossible," said the hot and suddenly bearded youth in a torn and muddy leather coat, his puttees and skin

equally frayed, his sun glasses cracked across, an angry mule suspended from one very sunburned arm.

"I don't care," I said recklessly. "I'm going to get to the top and see where we are."

Speechless, panting, slipping, we scrambled on till a final rock tipped us unexpectedly into a haystack perched on the edge of the cliff. A field stretched beyond, and, above it, the unnumbered hill that might be the last crest or merely one of an infinite series.

Fortunately for our tempers it was the last. It was crowned by a few hovels, where women danced and wailed the week-old loss of some relative, staring at us curiously while they beat their heads and wrung them as if after washing. When the groom spoke to them, they shrieked and ran away. Abashed, for he was a personable youth, he grinned at us.

"They are not used to strangers!"

We were immediately under the mighty crag of Zos and a splash of red on the ridge in front of us showed the carved rock façade of Gorgis, an underground church. Having dispatched Hassen to obtain some further specimens of guides, we returned to encourage the caravan. For an hour we waited at the top of the cliff, shouting directions and encouragement.

"I simply daren't go down," I said.

"I don't want to have to see them come up," retorted Jones.

When the last beast had, in some incredible fashion, caterpillared over the top, we selected the least dull-witted of Hassen's recruits, crossed the sugar-loaf range and slowly, very, very slowly, wound down through sand and rocks and multiple flat hillocks, each crowned

with euphorbias and a village. Description of that day would surely be as wearisome as the unending hours of it.

At each village, perforce, we took a new guide, for the old one, having lost his head, or the track, or both, abruptly left us, generally waving his arms in two directions. Northwest—"there is Gondar," and southwest, "that is the road. Tamallas! It turns."

It turned and we turned! Once, in the early afternoon, we strayed into half a dozen villages, which, by adding a syllable to their generic names (Mederdinje instead of Mederje) we could fit into a place on the map. There we took three guides and a policeman and, for two of the noisiest hours of a journey distinguished by its lung power, we wandered round and round, chiefly with our backs or right shoulders turned to Gondar. Whenever I pointed out the right direction by compass, all the guides agreed, and, with forked canes waving in three different directions, they announced simultaneously, "That is the head road. Tamallas. Tamallas!"

We crossed another river and Woldo Sambat regained his interest in life.

"Truly I lost my head a little," he said. "There was so much talk, but now, with my eyes shut, I could not miss the road to Gondar."

He strode ahead and, while Jones and Gabra Gorgis searched among the stones for a pocket of clean water, I followed numbly. After three hundred yards the track disappeared into a stretch of cotton. Without interest or feeling, I sat doubled in the saddle, while the

guide hesitated, saw two blacks approaching and demanded:

"Where is the road?"

"Eh?" grunted one.

"Au" (Yes), said the other.

Woldo Sambat repeated his question.

"Tamallas. It turns," said both slaves at once.

We camped in the cotton field and it rained.

Much later, when coffee and the prospect of an entirely new guide had cured our sense of humor—Jones had been making bitter remarks about my short cut to which I had responded in kind—there was a stir outside.

"One of the great has come to visit you," shrilled Gabra Gorgis and, unwashed, mud-stained and torn, we had to receive a personage, very black of cloak, very white of *chamma* and spotless trousers, the *Feterari* Tabaja, with twenty rifles around him and a smile as twinkling bright as their barrels. We exchanged our best and most complicated compliments for half an hour and then a note of reality crept into the conversation, for he offered us a guide!

"What sort?" asked Jones.

In the end the *Feterari*, smoking a gold-tipped cigarette out of curiosity and by the wrong end, suggested that, as he was returning next day to his house on the Gondar "road" we should ride with him. Thankfully. I agreed and my visitor departed, after pressing upon me a bunch of fowls, in exchange for which he would only accept soap. "For," said he, "my servants say their clothes are so dirty they will be ashamed to walk in front of you, but must keep far off." The idea of

playing hide and seek among the hills with a guide determined not to be seen was unattractive, so I doubled my subscription to cleanliness!

Our departure the following morning was most impressive and it was watched by all the villagers, who followed us for stages suited to their rank. First went the *Feterari* on a mule smothered in silver and scarlet, with a funny little page, possibly a Yemenese, smooth, olive-colored between the folds of a red and white turban and a striped cape. Behind him came two youths, one carrying Tabaja's topee, generally on his own head, which disappeared completely inside it, the other a black woolen cape and a clothes brush. Sandals and rifle were borne by an older pair and the rear was brought up by an assortment of men-at-arms and servants with eight-foot canes.

At the large village of Talla, we were assured that we were now on the main road, but, unfortunately people had been inconsiderate enough to plant cotton or grain across it, so we were never able to verify the statement! We passed lots of villages, all of whose names were unanimously produced for my information, but none of them appeared on the map, while no one from the *Feterari* to the oldest local inhabitant was able to recognize any of the places charted except Dabosje and Mariam Waha, both of which they said were far away, so we were still mystified as to where we were and when we should reach Gondar.

At one hut, a boy sold me a quart of milk for a pencil and, as he could neither read nor write, we wondered why he wanted it.

"He will take it to a wise man who will write him a charm to cure his belly," said Hassen.

"Wouldn't it be simpler if I gave him some medicine?"

"Better not," urged the interpreter. "These people are very ignorant." I remembered one of my earlier efforts to cure a boil with boracic ointment, when the patient had returned to say he did not like the taste, but had managed to eat the whole tube by mixing it with honey!

That day the land smiled at us with gold of barley and wild flowers and a twelve-foot bean, with pods like green balloons. When the hills, tinted like an American autumn with the vermilion-barked thorns, encroached on the farms, they were full of gazelle and guinea-fowl. One of the *Feterari's* soldiers tried a shot at a flock of the fat gray birds, while they stood watching him fifteen yards away. He missed, though he rested his rifle against a tree and, sitting down, aimed comfortably for several minutes.

"The Abyssinian can never hold his gun steady," said Hassen. "His hand always shake, because he eat lots of pepper and salt which make him thirsty and then he drink too much."

By mid-afternoon we reached Tabaja's property and, after vainly urging us to spend a night there, that he might provide us with all forms of food and fodder, he let the caravan proceed with a parting gift of ale, but insisted that we must visit his house. It was a huge round hut, with a corner partitioned off for a donkey, whose tail acted as a fly-whisk if one sat on that side of the wood fire. A third of the remaining space was taken

up by a stack of raw cotton and by half a dozen great mud barrels full of the same product.

"I do nothing to my plants, just leave them alone and they bear three crops a year. Now the country is white with their bloom and I shall not even pick it. What can I do? My house is already full of it!"

"You could get a good price in Addis Ababa."

"That is far away," said Tabaja indifferently.

We sat on a log covered with several hides, till some one brought a chair made of a triangle of gnarled branches, the seat plaited from leathern thongs. In a corner a nut-brown woman with hair close-plaited, showing the greatest beauty of the Abyssinian, a well-formed head, was weaving a basket of many colored grasses. She took no notice of us except to hand a gourd to a slave with a gesture in our direction. The milk it contained was full of extraneous matter, but very refreshing. On the strength of it we marched till four, and camped in the bush close under the range of hills beyond which, we were assured, lay Gondar.

"A day's march," said the groom.

"We shall be there before noon," prophesied Hassen.

"You will not see it by night," muttered Atto Belacho, who had a cut foot.

That night the robbers made a more successful raid on our mules and succeeded in capturing the best of them, as they returned from watering. Atto Belacho, who would not spend a bullet or half a salt to feed his caravan, trusting to Providence or me to provide barley, took the loss with a smile and a shrug.

"It is luck," he said, and left me amazed at the mentality which will venture nothing for success, but accepts

the worst failure with equanimity. An Abyssinian is a bad gambler but a good loser. We sent a messenger at once to the *Feterari*, asking help for the recovery of our mule, and his answer convinced us that the Ethiopian bears other people's losses even more placidly than his own.

"Anything lost in this district is never seen again. Robbers, villagers and headmen are in league and they all share the profits," replied the guardian of the law.

There was nothing left for us but to get as far away from such a province as possible, so we marched for ten and a half hours next day, passing Dankaz midway, but Gondar remained mysterious and aloof.

"How far is it?" we asked a peasant at midday.

"Two hours," he answered cheerfully, and looked round to add, "you won't get there to-night."

Much puzzled, we addressed the next passer-by.

"It will be an hour from where you put your tents to-night," he said.

"Where do you mean? Where do you suppose we shall put them?"

"How should I know—it depends on your walk," he answered.

All morning we climbed up to the narrow tableland on which wind-blown Dankaz perches. We saw Lake Tsana, a sheet of opal and turquoise in the distance, and all afternoon we labored down the rock shelves on the further side. Rain spat at us as we reached a valley and shepherded our caravan with revolvers ready across a river, which wound back and forth across the track in a persistent way that suggested collusion with the robbers.

We camped just as the clouds broke, precipitating a darkness rent with forked lightning and the twinkling of our patent lamps which defied any hurricane, but were often smothered under the weight of insect life which took refuge in them. Jones and I had made a bargain by which I slew anything under three inches in length, while he dealt with such "animals"—they really couldn't be called insects—as giant locusts and the squelchy red-brown things with the bodies of monstrous worms, bees' furry heads and beetle wings.

At five o'clock I roused the aching caravan and hurried it through the hills towards Gondar. After two hours the first of the old Portuguese ruins appeared on a hill sprinkled with churches. Woldo Gorgis exclaimed, apparently surprised, "that was in the same place last time I came here," as if the seventeenth-century fortresses had a habit of hopping around the country.

"What about your short cut?" asked Jones, looking at his watch as if it were a calendar.

"Well, it's gained us half a day and lots of experience."

"Dear at the price. Our clothes and our tempers are both in rags."

"Lace puttees and boots with ventilated soles may not be the fashion," I retorted, "but in any case they're cool!"

So, on the thirtieth day from Addis Ababa and the sixty-first from Dire Dawa, after a total trek of 873 miles, we reached Gondar.

Under the walls of Fasil's palaces we passed, below the two great sycamores, one the tree of Justice, the

other the scaffold from whose branches used to hang human fruit.

"I've found a splendid place for a camp. Inside here! Through the arch," shouted Jones, and we rode into what must once have been the main court of the twin palaces on the hill.

"What luck to camp right against your background," continued Jones, stiffness and swollen thorn scars forgotten as he seized his camera and clambered to the nearest point of vantage.

Æsthetically, Gondar was delightful. It was a world of ruins, half veiled in sugar cane and flowering shrubs. Out of a maze of fallen walls, with towers, pillars and broken domes scattered about them, rose the two massive Moorish castles. They were pale golden, from their cupolas and the ramparts which ran along their roofs between arches, carved and exquisite, to the great flights of steps, curving up to the first stories, where the windows were like the entrances to cathedral aisles. The similar portals below were walled up, and loopholed so that the ground-floor halls provide shelter in case of brigand raids. A few years ago, when the local *Dejez-match* was routed by a robber chief, so powerful that he was called King of the Mountains, most of the townsfolk took refuge in the palaces of Fasil and made terms with the brigand from behind their four-foot masonry. The three-hundred-year-old buildings are constructed from the rough stone with which the hills are covered, set in irregular plaster of a hard and durable nature, sometimes reinforced with pebbles. The arches of windows and doors are made of mud bricks. The main gateway is approached by a curved bridge over a sunken

track, which may have been a moat, and is flanked by domed towers, between which one passes into the first of the square castles.

King Fasil of Shoa, descendant of Solomon, enlisted the aid of five hundred Portuguese in his wars against the Moslems and, when his battles were ended in 1640, these warriors turned their swords, not into ploughshares, but into the tools of mason and plasterer. They built the famous twin palaces and, for the ladies of their patron's court, the adjoining "house of many loves," with its beautiful gatehouse composed of quadruple arches under a parapet like carved lace. To them also are due the church which is in better repair than the castles of a once great king, the tomb of Fasil's favorite horse, Zeboul, and, near it, Usquam, the house of pleasure, where the lord of Gondar amused himself in secret ways. The whole hillside is covered with the traces of their industry, and the huge forts, with their miles of once crenelated walls, the high domed towers, the gates and bridges, cisterns and bastions, contrast strangely with the huts, which sprawl in untidy clusters round the feet of so much ancient stateliness.

A smaller castle set lonely on a ridge belongs to a later date, but other Portuguese workmen are responsible for it, as for the bridge over which we crossed the Blue Nile on our way to Debra Tabor and for other masonry, whose remains are seen on hillside and in river bed in Northwest Abyssinia. From 1490, when Pedro de Covilhao was sent on a mission to the Negus Alexander at Tegulet, the Portuguese had much influence in Ethiopia, for a series of their most gallant soldiers of fortune vowed their arms to the help of Christian

Abyssinia in her struggle against the inroads of Islam, which ended in 1643 with the defeat of Mohammed Grav, the tyrant Emir of Harrar. Jesuit missions followed in the wake of these gentlemen adventurers, and to Portugal Abyssinia owes not only the architecture which made Gondar splendid in the days of her rule, but the best of her religious literature.

Our camp was a place of dreams, for surely the ghosts of those alien warriors who ventured so far in defence of the Cross must haunt the courts and halls built by their followers. There was no moon that night, but, between cloud rifts, the stars lit the parapets and ramparts of the one almost perfect fortress which lies below the double palace. Any moment a troop of soldiers might ride out from the towered gatehouse, a herald appear with his trumpet in the gallery, or a woman lean out of a Moorish window, with the shadow of a veil or mask across her face. All the ghosts would be cavaliers from Portugal or Moors, from whose prodigal waste of masonry the architects of Gondar stole their massive magnificence. The Abyssinians are a ruling race, but not a romantic one, so, illogically, I could not picture a shaven or woolly-curled ghost among the golden towers of Fasil's capital!

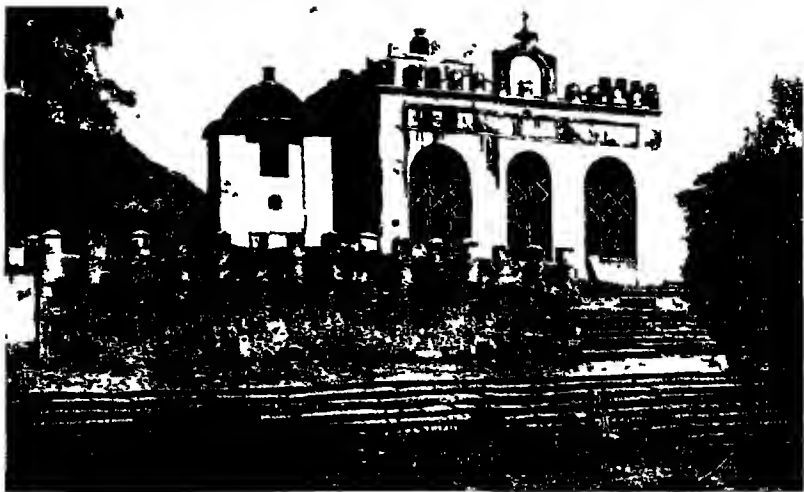
Practically, Gondar was unsatisfactory. Whenever our caravan had eaten more of our sugar, coffee or rice than it was possible to explain the loss of, they assured us there was an Indian in Gondar from whom I could buy everything. With this Jones and I had comforted ourselves when, owing to the retinue's passion for anything sweet, we had to limit our sugar to an almost invisible pinch in each cup, but of course the Indian was



View of ruined palaces at Gandai Kitchen on extreme left



Portuguese ruins at Gandai One of the twin palaces



Church at Axum where the original tablets of Moses are supposed to be preserved.



Rocks at Axum, supposed to have been cleft for the passage of Menelink, son of Solomon, when he fled with the Ark of the Covenant.

as imaginary as those so elastic distances. The Italian consul supplied us with the luxury of bread, for the last of our biscuits had been distributed to ease one of the famines due to the improvidence of our trustful escort, who always hoped the next Chum would be at home, or, as Hassen put it, "Mary would send bread."

The only things we could buy were the local mixture of coffee and strong spices, honey, onions, and bitter native flour. To pay for these, when our salts and bullets were finished, Woldo Gorgis offered me some mysterious little bundles which he kept tied up in rags in his pocket. They contained fragments of incense, a square inch of *kehol*, and a few dozen large seeds, from which women grind oil for their hair, but their purchasing power was immense. As soon as it was known I possessed such aid to beauty, the camp was surrounded by "pretty ladies" offering chickens and eggs in exchange for the temporary renewal of their charms. These were not very obvious, for the women had a cowed expression unusual in an African daughter of joy. Perhaps their surliness was typical of their Northern blood, for it seemed to me that, as the race became less diluted by alien intermarriage, its less agreeable characteristics intensified. The people of the North were arrogantly independent, casual, voluble and indifferent. There was no hint of servility among them. The great men were hospitable and courteous, but without the spontaneous charm of the Southerners. The little men were avaricious, yet too independent to earn the *bak-sheesh* they craved. A governor or headman would send a guide with us and the man after half a day would get tired or bored and leave us with a bow, despite the pros-

pect of a week's pay for an hour or two more of effort. Yet the same man would sit for half the night opposite our tents and ask for everything from a new *chamma* to matches. They are proud beggars, who give lip service to their masters and the constant flexing of supple back muscles, yet contrive to remain an unsubdued, resilient folk, as ready to rebel against one lord as to acclaim another. "I fight for him, but I am not his slave," said an unwilling guide, sent by a *Feterari*, but determined for no price to travel beyond the next mountain.

The morning we left Gondar there were so many and such complicated quarrels between our caravan and the townsfolk, that we had difficulty in starting at all. The Italian had assured us that it was fifteen or sixteen days' march to Adua, on account of the bad tracks. I insisted that none could be worse than the spiked switchbacks from Lalibela, and that nine marches must suffice us, for we were getting near the time limit for the development of the films. Jones was beginning anxiously to count the days since the first exposures at Dire Dawa and I had to repeat a dozen times exactly how long it would take us by land and sea to reach civilization, by which he meant a dark room and miles of hypo tanks.

At eight A.M. the caravan seemed inextricably confused with shouting men and screaming women. I rescued Atto Daiwitu from a crowd who wanted to sell him a mule for three times its value and buy one of his weary beasts for nine shillings, and the groom from a couple of rogues who offered fourteen shillings a piece for our three horses, on the ground that we should not

be able to use them in the mountains. Shrill above the clamor rose the falsetto of Balaina. A matron of large proportions and equal strength of lung was trying to drag him from his saddle, while another, youthful but quite as stalwart, had seized Gabra Gorgis's bridle. Exasperated, for the loaded mules were wandering loose among the ruins, I was going to leave them to their fate, convinced that their crimes had for once found them out. Next moment I saw the flour I had bought for the *zabaniers* wrenched from a pack-saddle and poured into a *chamma* torn equally violently from the shoulders of our cook. The form of my intervention was fortunately altered by Hassen's explanation that, though I had paid for the flour, Gabra Gorgis had stolen the sack!

At last we got rid of the spoilers and, I sadly suspected, the spoiled. Amidst explanations and accusations, with an occasional scornful "that is the Abyssinian way" from Hassen, we trailed across the hills. Usquam, like a beautiful solitary minaret, emerged for a moment from its grove, then faded among the trees, but, hours later, looking back as the guide waved his farewell: "Thank you. God keep you, Gondar!" I saw the two proud castles sentinel and lonely on their hill.

It was a day of glimpses. Tsana, the lake of opal, appeared like rainbow wrack on the horizon. Antelope flashed between the thickets. The guide saw a brigand! How he recognized him as such I do not know, but he hastily removed his sandals and looked to see that a strip of paper was carefully folded in each.

"What are these?" I asked Hassen.

"Charms written by a priest. He think they stop

stones hurting his feet and keep him on the head road, so he never lose the way."

"But are they going to help him fight the brigands as well?"

Hassen looked doubtful. "I think more likely as they in his shoes they help him run away!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

BATTLES WITH THE NORTHERNERS.

THE stony hills, with branches trailing pommel high across the path, ended at Argif and, thereafter, for two days, we rode across grass country, rolling up into comfortable ridges where peasants flailed their grain amidst semicircles of stacks, or down into thickets wherein streams were hidden. One mule, lamed by the rocks, his back torn by a fall, had to be shot. We bought two new ones for prices that confirmed the legend of an original Jewish Abyssinia, and disposed of all our horses for three pounds to a naive person who told us, "I sell for very much and I buy for very little. That is Abyssinian way."

"Well, supposing, following your example, I buy your mule for very little," I suggested.

He laughed.

"But that is not English way."

"Do you know so many English?"

"You are the first I have seen, but my father tell me, always sell for much to European man."

The thing we could not buy was food. Our stores were almost finished. The cows were dry. The hens would not lay. No one of the country would dispose even of an old spurred cock for soup. Sadly we ate macaroni and rice for breakfast, rice and macaroni for dinner, and both tasted of the muddy water in which,

perforce, they were boiled. The native coffee which we had procured at Gondar tasted so strongly of liquorice and pepper that we wondered whether Hassen had made a mistake in the name. The first cup made one thirsty, the second sick. We were luckier with the flour, a gritty substance the color of strong tea, for, with memories of Australia, I showed Gabra Gorgis how to make a sort of unleavened damper which, eaten hot and crisp, is good, though its weight is felt subsequently, as it settles slowly and painfully apparently in one's chest.

"Never mind, it is very peaceful," I said to Jones. "Our guide actually knows the way and—hullo! there is the largest bird I've ever seen."

A monstrous gray creature the height of a calf, its legs encased in tight-fitting black feather trousers, its tail composed of two long spikes with a roll of white at the end, a touch of scarlet about its head, stalked across our path.

"The plumage looks like a well-cut coat," I remarked, and while we were still arguing as to its species, we passed between the villages of Devark and found ourselves confronted by the usual illiterate customs. Nonchalantly I produced our torn permit and pointed out the government seals, waving the luggage to proceed, but my nonchalance vanished when half a dozen voices declared that they had nothing to do with the government, cared even less for it, and wanted a paper signed by their local *Dejezmatch*, of whom I had never heard. After an hour's wrangle, during which a ring of rifles formed round the luggage and I had become the bone of contention between a couple of *Feteraris* and their ever increasing followers, it appeared that the Gov-

ernor's house was a day's journey away off the road and that we were to be held hostage until a messenger should bring orders for our release or imprisonment. This was too much for our patience, and, discarding all reasonable explanations, I resorted to bluff.

"You daren't touch an English person traveling with the written authority of your government," I declaimed.

"We will keep your luggage."

"I shall go on alone."

"We will not let you."

"You can't stop me unless you shoot, and you daren't do that."

There was a muttered conference between the *Feterari* Makonnen, a thoroughly bad type, greedy and obstinate, and his confederate, Bazab, who was obviously frightened.

"You put your tents here and we will place many soldiers round. A messenger shall ride to the *Dejez-match* and when his answer comes you can go."

By this time, I was so angry that if the *zabaniers* had not discreetly hidden themselves and the *nagadis* "gone to ground" in a crowd so dense that it was impossible to extricate them, there would have been a battle. Two more hours passed in futile reiteration. Each side bluffed and threatened, but the situation remained unchanged. Only the mob and the babel had increased. To add to the clamor, a couple of disputants, tied together by their *chammas*, each holding the mane of the horse they claimed, wedged themselves and the struggling beast in front of the *Feterari* and attempted to out-shout the multitude. The result was that the

throng round my mule gave way and I was able to kick a passage towards Jones, who had hovered on the outskirts with the cinema.

"Let's make a bolt," he said.

"On a mule," I retorted, but though soldiers ran beside us, barring our passage with their rifles, nobody actually touched us.

"You must stay," moaned Hassen, waving his hands above his head. The shrill abuse of Gabra Gorgis added to the uproar. Fragments of Woldo Gorgis's, Atto Belacho's simultaneous speeches concerning our importance and the marvelous receptions accorded us by the various Rases echoed through it. Only Woldo Selessi retained his calm.

"It is this way," he murmured to me. "They heard you were great people and made this difficulty to get much baksheesh, but now the *Feteraris* dare not take it, because there are so many who watch, so they are very angry and would like to do you harm. Also all the soldiers are now excited and, when there are many together, these wild men shoot before they think!"

"Do not offer baksheesh now," implored Hassen. "It will look as if you were wrong."

"Baksheesh!" I almost choked with wrath. "I wouldn't give a farthing to anyone!"

On an inspiration I pulled a much used English passport out of my haversack and waved it in the face of the *Feterari* Bazab, a weakling who was obviously wishing himself out of the fray. It was an imposing document, stamped and sealed, scarred with many colored inks, bearing the arms of half Europe and all the East, and, fortunately, the less known the country, the larger

its hallmark. The *Feterari* was impressed, but I am not certain whether the lions of Czecho-Slovakia or the hieroglyphics of Persia decided him to treat. The green splash of Iraq had settled his accomplice. "I have far to go," he said. "I shall return to my house."

He slunk away with his riflemen while Makonnen realized that the only thing left to him was to carry out his threat and write to the *Dejezmatch*. I should like to have been able to read the letter which cost him half an hour's thought, seated on the grass beside a scribe with a wooden squill. Its composition cooled him sufficiently to allow Woldo Gorgis to accompany his messenger.

"Tell the *Dejezmatch* that all the Rases have welcomed us as princes, but this small man has treated us as thieves," I said aloud. The *Feterari* expostulated,

"If you really believe we have no right to travel, stop us," I stormed, "otherwise come with us for a few hours, since you say the messengers will return before night!"

Perhaps the *Feterari*, still obsessed by his original plan, though its realization differed considerably from its conception, hoped to satisfy his greed when he was alone with us. With difficulty and some display of force he dispersed the crowd, took a horse from a reluctant lingerer, and, with a dozen soldiers guarding the luggage and as many running behind their chief, we proceeded on our way nearly four hours late. Not a word was spoken. Jones and I were too hot and hungry to see the humor of the situation, too conscious of its drama to pull out some dingy looking rice balls from among the oddments in our haversacks and publicly chew them. The *Feterari* made a half-hearted attempt to stop us

where the tableland shed its grass mantle and slipped suddenly over the edge of Ulkefit cliff.

"It is a very high mountain. The mules can only go one at a time. All the loads must be taken off and the men must carry them."

Unrelenting, and without a glance at our tormentors, I drove the caravan in front of me. Singly the animals started down one of the usual precipices and we watched them jerking over huge slabs, slithering and bobbing as if they were corks on a stormy sea.

The most marvelous of all Abyssinian landscapes opened before us, as we looked across a gorge that was clouded amethyst to the peaks of Simyen. A thousand thousand years ago, when the old gods reigned in Ethiopia, they must have played chess with those stupendous crags, for we saw bishops' miters cut in lapis lazuli, castles with the ruby of approaching sunset on their turrets, an emerald knight where the forest crept up on to the rock, and, far away, a king, crowned with sapphire, and guarded by a row of pawns. When the gods exchanged their games for shield and buckler to fight the new men, clamoring at their gates, they turned the pieces of their chessboard into mountains. In Simyen they stand enchanted, till once again the world is pagan and the titans and the earth gods lean down from the monstrous cloud banks to wager a star or two on their sport.

We had to scramble down Ulkefit on the remnants of our feet—one of mine was still shapeless from the mule's attack—but, though Jones toiled hopefully ahead with the cinema, there was no place sufficiently difficult to necessitate unloading.

It was on a ledge, grass grown and sprinkled with huts which at first sight appeared to be the foot of the mountain, that our troubles began again. It was nearly five, but I determined to push on in the hope of getting out of the *Dejezmach's* district. The *Feterari* read my thoughts and assured me with much insistence: "If you walk for four days you will still be in my property," that I guessed this was the last "gate" of his province.

"One more effort," I said to Jones, but our followers were more putty-like than ever. They made a vague attempt to drive the mules, but, when the *Feterari's* men beat them back with their rifle butts, they just gaped, their guns useless on their backs, a stream of futility eddying out of their wide open mouths. Only Woldo Selessi and the cook joined Jones in rounding up the frightened animals, while I reiterated all the old arguments to Makonnen. By this time both of us were as obstinate as mules. He knew he was not going to get any baksheesh, guessed he had made a fool of himself, feared he might have to answer to the governor and mightier, if vaguer, powers above him for all these unpleasantnesses, he meant that we should pay. I was equally determined not to spend two or three days as semi-prisoners in a very dirty village, while *zabaniers* and *nagadis* drank themselves quarrelsome and every evil smelling pest from beggars to bugs swarmed in our tents.

It was obvious that with two revolvers and the groom's rifle we could hardly rescue the luggage from the score of soldiers who had once more taken possession of it, the more grimly because they did not intend to

walk further that day on any pretext. I felt it was time to play my last card.

"Very well. I can't help you stealing my luggage, but you daren't stop me. Come along, Jones. We'll go on."

The *Feterari* expostulated.

"You can't go alone. You will die on the mountain. There are hyenas and many robbers."

Hassen saw no reason why he should be excluded from the melodrama. "We will all go with her," he announced. "We will walk till we die."

Makonnen scratched his head with the end of a six-foot cane.

"What a violent woman!" he said. "I have never seen any one so hard. One would think she were a man if it were not for her face."

By this time two men were holding my bridle, so I dismounted, took off my water-bottle, called to Gabra Gorgis to bring the bag of rice, and, fingering the holster of my revolver, marched off. In front of me was a line of the *Feterari's* riflemen and for a second of regained humor I wondered if they would let me pass. If not, I should have to shoot or stop, and I realized that to do either would be ridiculous. Jones was following, his haversack slung across his shoulders. Unfortunately, this artistic touch was rather spoiled by Woldo Selessi, who had thoughtfully removed the torn and very grubby pillow which I had wedged between the bars of my saddle and was stalking after us in a trail of feathers. The rear was brought up by Hassen who, as usual, in moments of emotion, was wet eyed, hatless and gesticulating, and by Gabra Gorgis who

hugged a bundle consisting of a sleeping helmet—the temperature must have been well over 100° F.—a cone of sugar and a lidless kettle. Fortunately, the *Feterari's* riflemen were as impressed as Hassen by the pathos of the process. I had to avoid Jones's eye and remember how very hungry and hot, tired and furious I was, to prevent myself laughing at our ludicrous appearance, but the soldiers gave way. Without a glance at the *Feterari*, Jones and I stalked off attended by the muttering Hassen, who suddenly doubled back to fetch a woollen scarf and to reiterate to the embarrassed Makonnen:

"She will fall over the rocks. We shall all be hung. We have no lamp. There are wild beasts and wild men. She never stops. You will be put in chains, I lost my hat. No blanket. Very cold—we freeze. If she die, we all lost. No water in the bottles and so hot we have thirst. We lose the way and all die," till the *Feterari*, bewildered by the variety and extent of disaster which threatened us, caught us up.

"You can't go," he said, with eyes lowered. "If you do not stop my men will hold you."

We took no notice of this threat, but a clamor from the rear alarmed us. Atto Belacho had unslung his gun and the *zabaniers* were preparing to back him up.

"There will be war," moaned Hassen. "We shall be killed before we die on the rocks. My blanket is lost for two days."

I was too cross to care what happened, but I remarked to Jones that I was afraid our last card had failed.

"I won't go back," he said desperately. "Can't you

do anything? Shoot the brute or"—he had an inspiration—"cry! That's it. Try crying."

I looked at him doubtfully, then at Hassen, who muttered, "He very bad man. Dreadful. The water is in my eyes."

I pulled out an enormous red handkerchief which I used to put under my hat when the sun was ruthless. Burying my face in it, I wept! At first it was a histrionic effort and the amazement on the face of Woldo Selessi nearly turned it into laughter, but, as I remembered how much my feet ached and how much time we had lost, I managed to squeeze a little moisture out on my eyes. A minute more and I was sobbing wholeheartedly.

The effect on *Feterari* was as unexpected as it was rapid. I have never seen a man more uncomfortable. Without looking at us, eyes fixed on the ground, he signaled me on.

"Go, go!" he urged. "I will send your luggage. Only do not cry."

But I was too suspicious of such easy success and too doubtful of being able to start again, to stop so quickly. With the handkerchief as a mask, I walked on, conscious of the caravan clattering after me, but, fortunately, for the realism of my tears, unaware that Hassen was also weeping in a choky, unrestrained fashion, that had tried Jones beyond endurance. The path tumbled off the ledge in a slither of loose stones just as he exploded:

"I think you are most unsympathetic. Here have I saved you three days in the midst of that mess and

given myself a headache and spoiled my only clean handkerchief, and you laugh."

"Do look at Hassen!" retorted Jones. "He's doing it ever so much better than you. Did you ever see such drops?"

For two hours we plodded down the mountain, choked in dust. We camped when it was quite dark, and Atto Daiwitu could no longer make those long grasshopper leaps of his, counting the mules. "One, two, three, and the gray one; five, six, where is the one-eared wretch? six, seven, Mary help me, I have forgotten! One, two, Woldo Gorgis is it the new mule you have with you or that man Balaina?"

There was a crop of six-foot thistles on a shelf tip-tilted over the valley. Among the prickles we pitched our tents and spent the first part of the night looking for our various possessions, flattening spaces on which to balance them, and pulling spikes out of everything. There was no water, so we could not eat.

"Victory is sweet," said Jones, "but two aspirin tablets are an insufficient dinner. Do you think I could kill a roosting guinea fowl with a revolver?"

I implored him not to try. "They always say one sleeps better when one's hungry," I added.

In our case the adage proved untrue, for baboons barked at us in the few intervals when hyenas and *nagadis* ceased their concert. In the lull before the dawn the mules, tired of their thistle couch, wandered over our tent ropes, broke two before crashing onwards into the bush. At last I must have slept, for the next thing I heard was Jones's morning cry.

"Hassen, get the *zabaniers* up!"

"Yes," intoned the interpreter as usual, but perhaps there was a curious note in his affirmative or else the camp was unnaturally still.

"Tell the *nagadis* to get the pack saddles on. I want to start," I shouted.

There was a pause. Then, "And how would you start when there are no mules," came mildly from Hassen.

"No mules!"

"No. They have all gone!"

Obsessed by suspicions of the *Feterari*, who had haunted my dreams, I burst out of my tent, one boot on, the other in my hand. The thistles welcomed me and further conversation was conducted while I hopped round clutching a foot which resembled a hedgehog.

"Who has taken the mules? Have they been stolen, —or—"

I wondered how I could frame my conviction of a plot. Hassen was gently futile.

"All run away, perhaps want water, or else had men take. This not Amhara country. All wild peoples. Take everything and kill you for a few salts."

By this time I had observed some dark shapes looming amidst the bush.

"I can see just a few mules," I said.

"All the dead ones," returned Hassen.

"Well, they'll have to walk to-day. We'll take just the tents and flea-bags and Mr. Jones's tins. Gabra Gorgis will have to do with one of his boxes—the rest we'll leave behind."

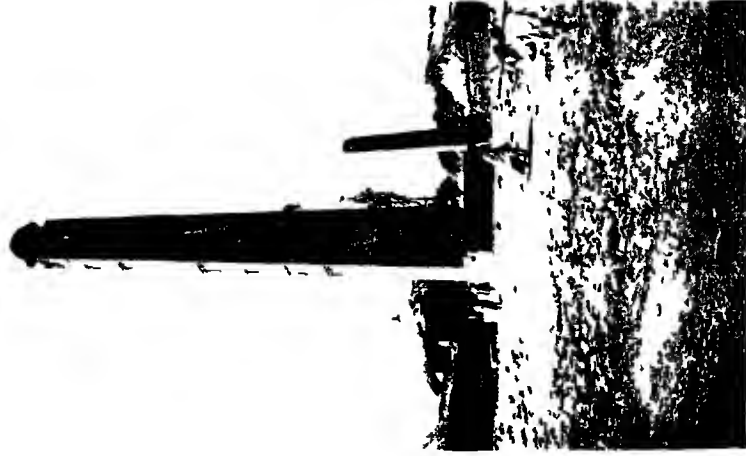
"There are no riding mules," said Hassen, with the monotony of a Greek chorus.



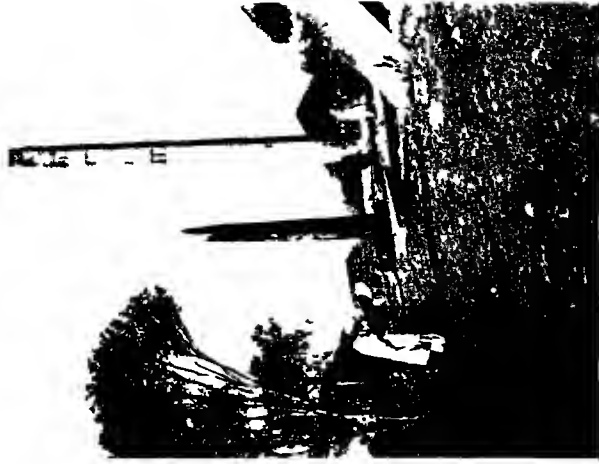
Axum, once the Queen of Sheba's city with monoliths still standing among the ruined huts



Jones on muleback beside fallen monolith, showing size of stone



Monolith of the Sun worshippers at Axum



Monolith at Axum massive as the pillars of a Druid circle

Attributing every obstacle to the machinations of the wily Makonnen and determined to circumvent them, I retorted:

"What does that matter? We can walk."

"Yes," acquiesced Hassen dolefully, "but how will you load them since there are no *zabaniers*?"

"What?"

"They have all gone with Atto Belacho to look for the mules."

"Which way did they go?"

Hassen waved hands and chin upwards in the direction of our enemy's territory.

"That settles it," I said. "We'll start at once."

We got the tents down and the beds rolled up rather quicker than usual, but, when it came to loading even a "dead" mule, our difficulties began. Gabra Gorgis was most helpful, though his instructions, given while he hung on to the lower lip of one furious animal, held another by the mane and kicked ropes about with his feet, were so numerous and divergent that we found it difficult to follow them. Balaina, naturally, got bitten at once and Hassen wandered around, feebly pulling any loose ends and murmuring, "I don't think that right way."

Fortunately, while we were struggling with a mule which seemed to have the expanding and contracting powers of a concertina, shouts came from above. The mules had been found! Gabra Gorgis shrilled back a series of questions and, from mountain crest to valley, the extraordinary carrying power of Abyssinian screams, informed us that the beasts had strayed in

search of water and been recovered at a mud hole a couple of miles up the cliff.

"I thought you were overdoing the *Feterari* bit," remarked Jones with as little grammar as tact. He made up for it by confessing his own idea.

"I imagined the *nagadis* were sick with us for going on so long yesterday and it was a wheeze to get an easy march to-day. I thought they'd just driven the animals into the bush and were roosting comfortably under some tree down there." He pointed to the thickets below us.

"Too many prickles," I said ruefully.

CHAPTER XIX.

AXUM, THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S CAPITAL.

WE marched for nine and a half hours that day and the next, covering thirty-five and a half miles of switchback mountain tracks. From the plateau of the Devark we descended 5,000 feet to cross the Zarima river. As we watered the mules, an enormous baboon led away a caravan of some hundred smaller gray and ribbed pink followers, with a leisurely dignity that was amusing. We climbed to Burr Mariam and camped by a little oozing mud under a sycamore, pretending it was water. At Maiteklit we had a dispute with the customs, from which we were rescued by a passing *nagadi*, who proud of his learning, misread our permit so effectively that the *douaniers*, awed, gave us a present of twenty very bad eggs, and, on the sixth day of forced marching, we climbed down to the Takkazye. For the third time we crossed the gray-green river, steaming hot among its trees and creepers, blistering hot above, where the breath of the black rocks scorched us. The leafless trees were colorless as the dust which whipped and stung. There was no blade of grass and the cleft was wrinkled into dry ridges like a badly healed cicatrice. Over these we labored, sweating, till the mules gave out and we were forced to camp with neither water nor fodder under the lip of the plateau.

"That's the third worst day we've had," said Jones.

"It was a dead heat between the Nile and that day among the thorns, but I think you're right about this," I agreed.

"No, Balaina, you can't wash anything, not even the cups, but if you bring me dirty macaroni in this temperature, I shall collapse."

A few minutes later I saw our servant happily spitting on the plates and wiping them on the edge of his shirt, which, since he had neither washed nor changed it for five weeks, was the color of sand and the consistence of tallow. Feeling sick, I went into my tent to look for my water bottle. It was only half full and I remembered that the guide had begged a succession of drinks during the Calvary among the rocks and that even macaroni must be boiled in something.

It was too hot that night to sleep inside the tents, so we pulled out our camp beds and sat under the stars. While Jones, whose tobacco had come to an end with everything else, was carefully inserting a fragment of cigarette end into his pipe, Balaina brought us a sticky mess which tasted like clay and smelt of mud and mules and humanity! We were glad when the dawn came and we could continue up the cliff towards the plateau and its promise of coolness. The last ledges were covered with pale, smooth-barked trees, coiled into knots so that they looked like serpents or ropes neatly reefed aboard ship. The *sabaniers* were delighted with them, for they provided sticks with funny twisted handles, hacked off where the trunks or branches began to curl. Monkeys of several kinds were plentiful and the nightmare birds were represented by what sounded like the clash of

cymbals. On the top of the cliff were thorn thickets and grass as stiff as cane. After a mile, the villages commenced, so that Gabra Gorgis was able to begin his pilgrimages in search of food. They were vain till, breakfastless and very thirsty, we reached Adankato and another customs!

"Water?" we asked.

"Far away," they replied. "If your mules last till noon you may come to it."

The Chum was bored at first, but the sight of half a dozen documents bearing the seals of his government apparently aroused his antagonism.

"I don't read Amhara," he said. "You must wait till some one passes who can translate this."

"But how long will that be?" asked Gabra Gorgis mildly. He was the only man in the caravan who could speak Tigre and not a soul in the village understood anything else. The Chum gazed vaguely up the road.

"Sometimes *nagadis* come this way who are learned men speaking strange tongues."

This was too much and even Atto Belacho exploded. The headman realized that he had insufficient rifles to do more than harass our unfortunate mules, now being beaten back and forth between the Tigrenis, and the, for once, thoroughly roused muleteers.

"I could write to the *Dejezmach*," he said.

"How far away is he?"

"Three days perhaps, if he is in his house."

That Chum had neither the obstinacy nor the following of the *Feterari*. After an hour's wrangle he let us go, but Gabra Gorgis foolishly lingered with a *zabanier* to buy food. The fast was now weeks old, and

the stores of bad eggs increased daily. Our cook sat down with a gourd of fresh water to test the eggs that were brought to him. When he had discarded the first dozen, he was seized by the Chum and threatened with immediate imprisonment. The uncomprehending *sabanier* was to suffer a similar fate that Adankato might be revenged on the "hard woman" who had flouted its customs, unless—there is always that "unless" in Abyssinia. Gabra Gorgis expended his shrillest Tigre and every dollar he and his companion possessed before the spoilers released him.

He caught up with us at nightfall when, after a march of over ten hours, part of it through a violent hailstorm, we were camping beside some dom-palms which hid water. The mules were exhausted and there was no possibility of buying fodder. The grass was rank and scarce. Another terrific storm was blowing up and we had had nothing to eat for twenty-four hours. I was just trying to break open the locked case which held pots, pans, and the eternal macaroni, when our cook hurried up.

"There is no food, never!" he exclaimed, and broke into the tale of his ill-usage. Wanly, I waved him towards a pile of wood which we had collected.

"Malesh. It doesn't matter, cook anything."

Gabra Gorgis was struck by a sudden memory.

"I have a bird," he said.

My face brightened as he fumbled in his *chamma*. After a long search he pulled out a partridge chick, still warm and a trifle larger than a sparrow.

"I hit in on the head with my stick," he said.

The question of customs in the North presents a

serious difficulty to any traveler who is unwilling to bribe a horde of rapacious officials or to sit down placidly under the village olives or sycamores until both their patience and their hope are exhausted. The government writ does not run lower than the multiple *Dejezmatches* whose followers are generally uncertain and always indifferent as to the identity of their master's master. The farther away from Addis Ababa, the more numerous are these tollgates, till, in Tigre, they are met on an average of one in each twenty miles. The *nagadis*, passing between Asmara and Gondar are obliged to pay, not a single set of customs at the frontier, but one for each petty district at the rate of a dollar for each four loads of hides, half a dollar per mule-load of sugar, honey or coffee, and one salt for every thirty bars. When it is considered that a mule carries only twenty-four dollars worth of honey or twenty-five to thirty dollars value in hides, and that there may be seven or eight tollgates on one journey, it will be realized that serious trade is an impossibility. When we were in Gondar, sugar was selling at nearly \$1.75 American money, for a cone of two pounds.

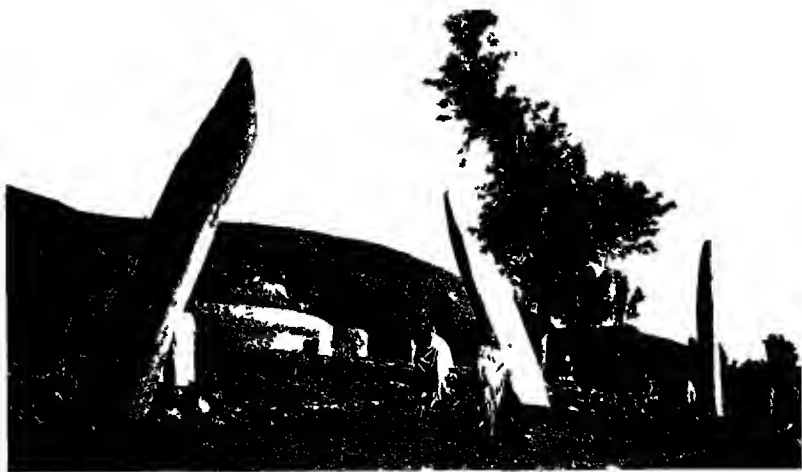
On the eighth day of our march from the old Portuguese city, when we were crawling along at barely two miles an hour, the mules with hardly any backs left, the guide turned to us with a smile. "There is another gate round that corner," he said, "and there will be trouble because the old *Dejezmatch* is going and the new one hasn't come."

We had hopes of reaching Axum on the morrow and we were day-dreaming of sheep, brown and woolly. "One each, please," said Jones—very fat and tender

fowls, and, above all, sacks bursting with barley for our starved beasts."

Grimly I demanded the house of the departing governor. Into it I forced my way, waving sealed documents in front of me as the flags under which I fought. Everybody was so amazed at this early morning energy that they led me straight to a very old, unsmiling personage, obviously uninterested in the greatness which was so soon to leave him. The caravan tottered to a standstill outside the mud tower of his yard, and I imagine the hours would have flown by while his excellency and his retinue chorused their impotence simultaneously with a trio of protests executed by a *zabaniër* in Amharic, Gabra Gorgis in Tigre and Arabic mixed, and Hassen in what he thought was English. Luckily one of the officials spoke Italian, and was so delighted to be able to practice the many compliments he had learned in it that he came to our rescue. Magnificently, he waved my permits into my pocket, and myself back onto a mule, about which Woldo Selessi was betting as to whether he would live to Axum or "die in his walk."

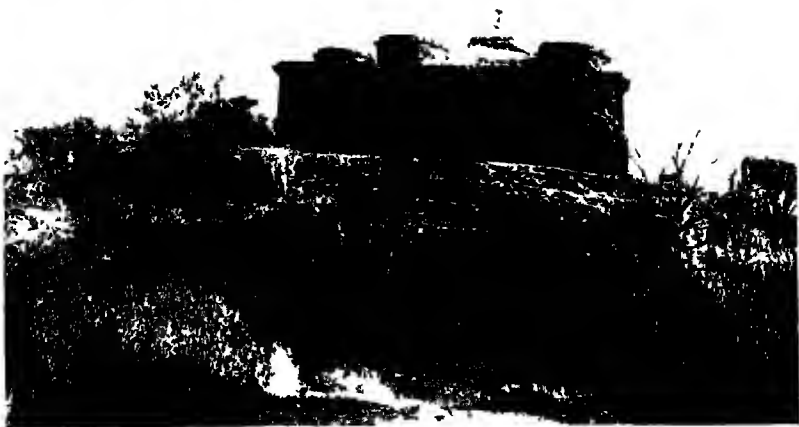
Slowly the weary procession reformed and, through a day punctuated by small villages, we demanded, "Have you barley, shimbura, mashila?" The answer was always, "None to sell," until, in the late afternoon, we came to Ardaga Sunni, where the tableland is tufted with hills and the huts cluster on the slopes above their fields. Here, at last, we bought a solid meal for our beasts, and stood watching them eat with the expression of the family butler, pressing yet another slice of his sister's wedding cake upon the schoolboy heir!



Some of the smaller monoliths at Axum, which soon will fall



The battlefield of Adua, where Abyssinian independence was established.



At Fremona stands the church built on the site of the first Christian church erected in Abyssinia, and where, according to legend, the Queen of Sheba is buried.



Farewell to the Abyssinian bush.

It rained again that night, or rather a succession of clouds burst over us, flooded the tents two inches deep in water, and left us and our possessions so sodden that it was impossible either to pack or to dress. Everything was either swollen or shrunk, so that we were thankful for the semi-darkness, due to the storm and an early start, which shrouded our meeting with the newly appointed *Dejezmatch*. For an hour his luggage, slaves and riflemen had been filing past us—old women laden with gourds, small boys eclipsed by the baskets on their heads, girls with bundles, a solemn person with a bottle that looked very like whiskey, and made Jones's mouth water, and all sorts of animals, from a couple of oxen to a minute terrier pup. Where the path was narrowest, and we were trying to disentangle ourselves from a caravan of some hundred mules loaded with hides, we met the governor. As we had a letter of introduction to him from Ras Tafari, there was a general dismounting and much bowing, its grace perhaps rather spoiled by the jumble of men and beasts and the precipitance with which our own muleteers and the hopelessly entangled strangers sought to double themselves into bundles under the mules' hoofs in order to kiss His Excellency's feet. When we had all resorted ourselves, we discovered that the *Dejezmatch*,—such a nice one, burly and almost fair, with a jolly twinkle and big square teeth to match his jaw—had despatched one of his own followers with us. So the rest of our march to Axum was peaceful and, if we passed any tollgates, their guardians showed no interest in us beyond a smile and a bow from the waist.

In the afternoon the huts of what was once the Queen

of Sheba's capital came into view, circles and circles of them, each group in a stone-walled compound, with a double-storied gate, so that, before admittance, visitors could be inspected from the discreet little window above the entrance. Between these we passed in a cloud of dust and the largest crowd of small boys we had yet managed to collect, to the market square. It was thronged with caravans on their way to Gondar and Asmara, which had paused to sell white cotton stuffs and sugar, or leather, oil and honey, according to whether they came from south or north. On one side stands the two-storied plaster house of the governor, and on the other the old church of Mariam, spoiled by a hideous modern façade of wood and plaster, and by a pinkish square tower. The remaining walls of time-mellowed stone were constructed by the Portuguese; they suggest a fortress rather than a sanctuary of the Virgin.

Legend insists that here, in the holy of holies, are treasured the original tablets of the Ark, stolen by Menelik son of Solomon when he left Jerusalem with 1,000 youths from each of the twelve tribes, to found a Jewish kingdom in Africa. Another story tells that the Ark of the Covenant, in which the sacred stones were kept, is buried in the Axum rocks, which opened miraculously to give passage to Menelik, pursued by the army of his indignant father, but closed upon his spoil.

For nearly 3,000 years, the Abyssinian kings have been crowned in Axum and, since the fourth century, when Frumentius was consecrated first Bishop of Axum by Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, the ceremony

has taken place within the precincts of the Church of Mary, to which women are denied admittance. Nothing feminine is allowed inside the many enclosures of a church dedicated to the Madonna, and the rule is so rigidly enforced that no mare or cow, hen or goose may be kept in the adjoining houses of the priests. One wonders if a sparrow, building her nest under a convenient eave, would be excommunicated with bell, book and candle!

The history of Axum goes back to the days of the Himyarites who left Arabia Felix to found first Yeha or Ava, then Axum in Ethiopia. They brought with them their ancient religion, sun and stone worship and when, early in the fourth century a King of the Axumites, Aizanes, raised a monolith in commemoration of his victories, one side was inscribed with Sabæan, the other with Greek characters: To "Ares who is my father," he returns thanks and early Ethiopian coins are decorated not only with a globe on a crescent, the Himyarite symbol, but with Greek letters and, after the introduction of Christianity (facilitated no doubt by this knowledge of Greek) with the cross. "Auxum and Adulis were the chief centres of trade for gold dust, ivory, leather, hides and aromatics," writes the sixth century Nonnasus, and Kosmas the monk describes the yearly expeditions of a King of Aksum to exchange salt, iron and ox-flesh for the gold ingots of "Sason." In A. D. 386 Constantine sent the mission of Theophilus to visit the King of Auxum "who dwells near the entrance to the Red Sea." There is a legend that, when the Ethiopians crossed the Red Sea in A. D. 522 to succor the persecuted Christians of Arabia, they used

rafts made of planks bound together with cords. Three years later the sceptre of Axum swayed all Yemen, which she ruled through a viceroy, and, a century later, the ancient city gave refuge to the persecuted followers of the Prophet. For this reason Mahomet never invaded Ethiopia and though his more intolerant African converts wage war on her, probably as much for her legendary gold as for the faith she so well defended, to-day an Abyssinian can be sure of a welcome in most Moslem countries.

The Jewish Falashas under Judith Queen of Simyen captured Axum from the descendants of Solomon in the tenth century, and ruled it for more than 100 years, when Tekla Haimanot of Lasta drove them out. His successors reigned over the whole of Abyssinia except Shoa, always loyal to the line of Menelik, till, in 1268, one of them abdicated in favor of the original dynasty. From that time the heirs of Maqueda, Queen of Sheba, had fought and won, fought and lost, but always ruled some part of Ethiopia, till they were recognized as Kings of the Kings, and to avoid family feuds it became customary to incarcerate all male relations of the reigning emperor, first at Axum then in some other special prison. At the monarch's death, the Rases chose a successor from among the royal captives. From cell to throne went the puppet king, and the power remained in the hands of regent and governor, who dethroned at will the rulers they had selected. Thus, once at least, there were half a dozen simultaneous ex-emperors living in various parts of Abyssinia. In the 17th century Gondar ousted Axum from her position as capital, but the older city still crowned the Negus among the traces, fast

disappearing, of his amazing lineage. Today, looking at the mud huts, with their straggling eaves of grass, riding through by-ways strewn with refuse and dung, the jawbones and skulls of animals, crowded with smells so individual that they seemed as tangible as the unwashed beggars who add to them, it is impossible to visualize the Sheban capital.

One trace of the old Axum remains in the mighty monoliths which, from an open space beyond the "house of Mary," dominate the hovels and the churches. Originally there must have been a line of these great plinths, for all that end of the village is strewn with broken masses of stone, incredibly vast and carved into pediment and capital. Some are plain shafts, massive as the pillars of a Druid circle, others are carved with ornamental designs and must have soared up, pointed, slender, to the first clouds.

There are still a few upright blocks among the many fallen, scattered along the edge of the huts, and one group stands superb. It is composed of five monolith shafts, the four outer plain and considerably lower than the carved central spear, which must be between seventy and eighty feet high.

This is the finest of the standing monoliths, and like its colossal fellow which, broken into several slabs, lies in a trough near the reservoir, it represents a building of many stories. The base is the altar. The first tier has a sham door and, above this each story is marked by a suggestion of beam ends as if the original model had been in wood. Each monolith faces the rising sun, and at the top there is often a semi-circular space in

front of which a metal disc was attached. Behind one such capital there is a faint representation of the sun.

Theodor Bent, who visited Axum in 1893 and commemorated his journey in a most interesting book "The Sacred City of the Ethiopians," thus describes the religious purport of these monoliths:

"At the foot stand the altars. . . . One of these, 7 ft. 10 in. by 9 ft. in width, has a raised platform, in which is cut a vessel, strangely resembling a Greek kylix, to receive the blood of the slaughtered victim. Two channels cut at two corners enabled the blood to flow on to the lower platform, where again we have three more recipient vessels cut and a complete series of holes all round and two more channels at the corners to enable the blood to flow on to the ground. Such altars as these were common in Mithraic worship, when victims were sacrificed to the great sun-god."

Mr. Bent points out that the great standing obelisk, some sixty feet high, is by no means the biggest, for monstrous fragments measuring 12 ft. 8½ ins. in width as against the 8 ft. 7 ins. of the standing monolith are to be found in an adjoining garden.

The walls of compounds and houses are frequently reinforced with ancient blocks that must once have formed part of the amazing series of obelisks whose evolution can be traced from the earliest rough-hewn plinths, scarcely shaped at the tops, through varying stages of architecture and decoration, to the magnificent nine-storied plinth already described. The row of great stones stretching up the valley are as primitive as Zimbabwe or Stonehenge, but, gradually the plinths are

notched and shaped, then cut into bands, each representing a story supposedly supported on beams, while some of the latest have locks, bolts or handles to the false doors and one can picture the imaginary halls within. All round the present town are fallen stones or blocks that look as if they were once pedestals.

From the stone inscribed in Greek and Sabæan whereon Aizanes describes himself as "King of the Axumites and Homerites, and of Raëidan, and of the Ethiopians, and of the Sabæans, and of Zeila, etc., etc.," with a dedication to Mars and the mention of three Sabæan gods, a line of these stones led up to the heart of ancient Axum. According to Professor Müller, they were of a later date than the obelisks and were the pedestals of metal statues, the actual "thrones set up in Sada," to commemorate the victories of Axum. Mr. Bent saw on one such stone the marks where the feet of the statue had rested and, in some cases, there are grooves into which perhaps the metal figures were fixed.

The various inscribed stones were probably set up near the statues to which they belonged. Ruppell, d'Abadie, Bent, Dillman and Müller have left us copies and translations of the fragments which existed at the periods of their various expeditions. These describe the campaigns, battles and spoils of the Axum kings, the history of their reigns, their vows to different gods, the dedication of "one statue of gold, one of silver and three of brass," and the extent of their dominions.

The carpet of mud huts must hide a treasurehouse for the archæologist, while the Church of Mary, constructed on the site of a series of earlier buildings, with foundations of huge blocks probably once the base of a

Himyarite temple to the sun, is full of interesting relics. I was only allowed to penetrate the outer court, where there is a row of massive stone pedestals that must have borne statues similar to those in the field of Mars outside the town. Near the gate of the inner court is the stone on which the emperors were crowned and the whole place is littered with ancient stones and fragments of rude carving.

An hour's ride north-west there is a lion outlined on a rock and farther away a hill-top is crowned with "The House of Solomon" where the lion head is again apparent.

Our camp was pitched under the rocks once cleft for the passage of Solomon's son. A score of imps, half-naked, clustered on the crest and shrilled their comments like starlings in a chimney. Balaina's whine ran through the falsetto chaffering of Gabra Gorgis. The mules rolled in the dust and bit their sore backs within a foot or two of the dish wherein the *zabaniers* made their bread. A mist of smoke rose over the hovels, transforming them into fungus round the feet of those slender, age-old pillars.

I tried to catch the glamour of history and legend as in the ruined palaces of Gondar, as in rose-red Lalibela, but it eluded me. A dog ran through the tent ropes carrying a dusty sheep's head. Some men with rifles were arguing with a couple of boil-covered beggars who had tied together their rags in sign of a dispute which they desired to make public. A lame horse, with back and quarters in ribbons, hobbled into view.

"You dogs and sons of thieves!" shrieked Gabra Gorgis. "Is it a Christian who would offer me two chickens

that are but feathers stuffed with bones, and eggs black from last year's fast for a dollar!"

Then a boy came up to me. Tall and wide-eyed and frank, he spoke to me gently, holding something in the corner of his *chamma*.

"I have brought you a present, because they say you have come a very long way."

I looked up, surprised. With care, he unfolded a minute object and offered it on his outstretched palm. It was a tiny copper coin, smaller than a farthing, worn and green with age. Himyaritic, I thought, but perhaps even Sabæan.

"It is very old," said the boy. "I found it up there in the hills, but I have no learning to appreciate it."

I thanked him and offered him money, but he smiled as he threw the end of his wrap over his shoulder.

"No, it is a gift, and may Mary bless your feet."

His bow was so swift that his head had brushed my skirt, and he was off again, chin up, long cane swinging, before I could reply. For a moment, I stood looking at the fragment of metal, engraved and molded as much by time as by the coiners of 1,400 years ago.

Now the smoke hid the huts altogether and, in the damp air, it writhed into phantom hosts. There was a lull about the camp. and, from a far off monastery, came the rhythm of chanted psalms. The monoliths were pinnacles of mystery piercing the storm-darkened sunset, while the song of David, grandfather of the son of Solomon who first reigned in Axum, drifted through the whorls of mist, as the breath of battle music before a regiment of ghosts.

"I have bought a goat," said Gabra Gorgis suddenly

in my ear. "I think it is sick, because of the look in its eyes which are shut, but I will kill it quickly before it dies, and make a good soup."

At Axum, the camera was unpopular. For the first time it was regarded not as a god to be propitiated, but as something evil to be destroyed. When we erected the stand in front of the obelisks, there were angry murmurs among the crowd and a few stones were thrown at us. These increased to a shower, when the boys found themselves unchecked by their elders, but fortunately the shaky hand is hereditary, and the missiles proved as harmless to us as Abyssinian bullets to guinea fowl and gazelle.

There was an undignified moment at mounting, when a fretful throng surged round us, uncertain of purpose, but bent on annoying, and another, equally futile, when soldiers of the local *Feterari* ran after us with streams of apology ending on the usual expectant note.

Sunshine blazed across the plain as we left the last of the shafts raised, according to some authorities, in honor of the sun-god centuries before our era. It stood alone at the foot of a hill, outpost of the forty-three which once decorated the city. Fabulous as Time, Axum has buried her secrets with the splendor that must once have been hers, and her history remains as mysterious as the great obelisks.

"Four hours to Adua if we hurry," I said, as we rode east towards the strange mountains, guardian of Abyssinian independence and the battlefield which ensured it to her. But the mules refused to hurry and, after a few miles, the animal which had brought me from Ankober went lame on a flat path. We were examining

its foot when some Tigre women passed, their babies hung on their backs in leather bags. They must have recently visited the local coiffeur, for their hair was freshly oiled and twisted. The smoothest tressed, who had gold ear-studs and a flower in each nostril, plucked a shell from her chain of amulets and stuck it into my mule's ear.

"Now she will walk like the wind. Have no fear," she said. But the beast remained lame, and I had to balance warily on a baggage mule, till a sudden corner revealed a blessed and most unexpected sight. A cluster of fine riding animals with European saddles stood under a tree in charge of white-robed riflemen, and the instant I saw those snowy *chammas*, I realized that the white of Abyssinia was really only gray or, as Jones put it, "the local flesh-color." A personage—the size of his felt hat and the shiny yellow boots entitled him to this description—approached us with a bow.

"The compliments of the Commendatore Pollero. He hopes you have made a good journey, and will graciously finish it on his mules."

What benedictions we poured on the head of the kindly Italian Consul, as we rode smoothly towards Adua, the center of his kingdom, for this "Africano" of thirty years' experience has more influence on the Abyssinian border than any of the Rases or Dejezmatches who juggle with its robbers and other customs.

Swiftly we approached the hill of Fremona. It is surmounted by a huge bastion and fragments of the walls erected by the Portuguese before they were driven out of this last stronghold in Ethiopia on account of religious dissensions and political intrigue. We

climbed between mud huts to look for the hewn stones of the Western masons, which are now scattered through the heterogeneous walls of a later date. One side of the ancient rampart is intact and it circles a mound, grass-grown and pierced by what may once have been a very deep cistern, connected perhaps with a subterranean water-course. According to legend, it is here that Maqueda, Queen of Sheba, was buried by her Jewish son, and another story makes the hill the site of Frumentius' first Christian church in the Ethiopia he converted nearly 1,600 years ago. Since then a succession of churches have withstood the winds and storms of that high place and the present one, square, rudely built of stones and surmounted by a cross of ostrich eggs, is of considerable antiquity. It is a curious structure, low and squat, with four towers, cut so short and flat as to look like drafts stuck on the corners of a box. It is approached by a flight of broad, steep and irregular steps which, since they take up the whole side of the mound, are both taller and more imposing than the church out of perspective at the top of them. Inside the building there is a narrow rectangular passage with a quartette of doors, giving access to a square tabernacle made of roughly sawn trunks so vast that they must have been hewn from some distant sycamores, for I saw no timber in Adua sufficiently large to produce those beams.

When we came out of the building, sun-washed and sun-faded to a gold as pale as the bleached grass on the hill, a christening was in progress. Under a mud tower, with convulvulus dripping from its thatch, a hide was spread. On it sat a fifteen year old girl, cross-legged,

her baby wrapped in a kid skin, which was sewn with shells and amulets. A boy swung a censer beside the priest, who, his tall cross in the crook of his shoulder, read under his breath from some leaves of painted vellum. As I passed, he turned and, still reading, held the cross out to me to kiss.

CHAPTER XX.

RETROSPECT.

LUNCH," said Jones. "No more work till I've eaten my eightieth chicken—since Addis I mean—I didn't keep count before."

We wrangled amiably as to his figures.

"Two a day is rather high," I said, "there have been a good many blanks——"

Round the hill we went and Adua lay, a blur of huts and trees, at the foot of her mountain cones. Ruined walls and forts showed where the Italian guns had done their work. The remains of Gabra Selessi's gibbe sprawled over a slope. A deserted mission shaped like a tower, stood out against the mud and thatch, which shelter the seven or eight thousand folk of Adua. But what interested us most after six weeks of rocks and thorn, of comprehensive and variegated aches, of sweat, mud and storm, was a red sandstone house, half-buried in bougainvillea.

"Bread," said Jones, a gleam in his sun-mottled eyes.

"A bath!" said I.

The Commendatore came out to welcome us, ignored our holes and tatters, offered us the hottest of water and the coldest of drinks, ministered to our blisters with ointment, and our vanity with a wondering:

"I heard you had left Gondar, but how could I ex-

pect you for another week? No one, except an occasional native messenger, does the journey so quickly."

We beamed of course and then, washed and sticking-plastered, we were given a wonderful lunch. There were slender silver glasses for the grape-scented *Asti spumante*. Bougainvillea was strewn along a tablecloth which struck me as remarkable till I remembered that white had been for some time only a relative term! It was delightful to listen to Italian, soft as the velvet which sheaths the rapier of its thought. Words were no longer squandered in maximum of sound and minimum of meaning. They generally had several meanings, all of them amusing, but I was too immersed in food to take much part in the thrust and parry which flashed between the Commendatore and his two compatriots. There was chicken of course, but it bore no resemblance to the wiry brutes which had developed the muscles of our jaws. There was also macaroni, a very distant connection of the gray paste we used to eat and which certainly bore a bar sinister on its escutcheon! Best of all there was a *sabaglione* whose foam of eggs and sugar and Marsala only an Italian hand is light enough to produce. It has the froth of their compliments, the sting of their wit, the mellowness of their experience and the gold of their eternal illusions.

"Well," said the Commendatore at last, when the silver glasses were empty, and Jones was gazing at a whole cigarette as if it might disappear at the touch of a match. "What are your impressions of Abyssinia?"

It was a difficult question, for each state produced a new impression, modified or strengthened an old one.

"We traveled beyond their pace," I said eventually

and thought that this was what all Europeans, politicians, merchants, financiers, tried to do. Both the land and its inhabitants must develop slowly and it is as difficult to penetrate the mind of an Ethiopian as it is to open up his country. There is a considerable difference between the North and the South, though the basic characteristics are the same. In the North suspicion of strangers, a distrustful independence have been fostered by the isolation of each village community. In the South these are modified by more frequent contact with the world, so that the people are more friendly, good-humored and hospitable. In no quarter does one find any sense of personal responsibility and a man's word is as valueless as his idea of Time. The guarantor is a national institution, and typical of the lack of faith a man has in his fellow.

"There are no hours in the mountains."

We heard that phrase half a dozen times a day, and it is representative of a race which cannot bear to do anything regularly. This is one of the greatest barriers in the path of trade, for an Abyssinian will give any amount of baksheesh rather than pay one regular salary.

There is no modern consciousness in the country. With the exception of the Regent, and perhaps one or two others, there is no difference in the basic conception of life, between governor and peasant, between the educated and the ignorant. As one of our *zabaniyers* put it. "To sit, to eat, to talk of money is Abyssinian life." He might have added, "to drink." Beyond this the Ethiopian has but two thoughts, a little fighting and as much display as possible. In Syria, Pal-

estine, Iraq, there is a striking difference between the outlook of the illiterate old-fashioned Moslem or Christian and the product of the Beyrout schools. It seems incredible that just one generation of education can turn the superstitious gutter child of the markets into the polyglot students, doctors, journalists who study the politics of Europe as the weather vane of their nationalist aspirations. In the modern Arab world there is a keen desire for education. They are anxious to compete with Europe, to enter the world markets, and, conscious of the obstacles in their path, they appreciate intelligent criticism.

"What do you think of our country?" is demanded by any Arab of any traveler, but no Abyssinian would put such a question. Satisfied with himself and his way of doing things, the peasant bulk of the nation is wholly uninterested in foreign affairs, foreign methods or the opinion of those foreigners who cross his limited horizon. He has no desire for education, no consciousness of inferiority, perhaps because he has never suffered from an alien rule, which, by stimulating his racial instincts and his lust for independence, would have spurred him both to effort and to unity. As it is, each province is a separate proposition, with no desire to change anything but its minor officials and the pattern of its rifles! The only real passport is in silver, and bears the portrait of Maria Theresa! Typical of his dual nature, the sportsman and the gossip, the warrior and the drone, every villager who can afford it carries a gun and a parasol. He is supremely content.

"This is the Habashi way," he says to any suggestion of change.

With regard to trade prospects, the South has its railway and, more important, a Regent who intends to make Addis Ababa an efficient and prosperous capital. With these assets and a dawning sense of the value of foreign relations, it is possible that, slowly, the Abyssinian may compete with the Arab, Indian and Armenian merchants, but I am convinced that at heart he is no trader. As the North exaggerates all root characteristics, so the pure-blooded peasant of the mountains shows best the unbusinesslike qualities of the Abyssinian. He is too cautious to invest, too slow to take advantage of opportunity, too mean to be content with a fair profit. He is too distrustful of his partner or his clients, and too verbose to carry out any but a public affair. It is possible that the pressure of foreign influence may gradually change his outlook, but it is rooted in three hundred years of independence, and an isolation which, throughout the centuries, has been geographical, political and religious.

The volcanic construction of the country presents every possible barrier to its development. The cultivated tracts and the villages are on the tablelands and ledges six to ten thousand feet above sea level, while the rivers, often 100 feet below it, cracks torn out of the rock, pathless and precipitous, are an incredible obstruction to travel. Roads and railways are essential to trade, for, at present, it is dependent on mule or camel caravans. The average pace of the former is five miles a day in bad country, seven or eight in good. The *nagadis* habitually do the Gondar-Addi Quala route, 226 miles, in a month, and they have to choose whether they will camp beside the rivers in the heat and

barrenness of the canyons, or on the highlands where there is grass but rarely water. Some of the mountain Abyssinians boast that they have never drunk water in their lives, and they certainly make no other use of it!

It is doubtful if the amount of trade would ever suffice to repay the construction of highways which would be unparalleled feats of engineering. The land is not mountainous in the ordinary sense of the word. It is cleft into fissures and piled into sheer crags, and there is no possible communication, except a very round-about goat-track, between many of the inhabited ledges. With a population of over ten million, there are no towns except Addis Ababa. The people are scattered in huts, which are so easily constructed of the local mud and grass that their owners are nearly as mobile as the Bedouins of Arabia. The sites of the weekly markets change according to the seasons and the crops. There is no general tongue, so that even the neighboring provinces of Tigre and Amhara cannot understand each other. There is no general currency. Menelik dollars are rarely accepted, piastres are only good in the South. Cartridges of two different kinds, bars of salt, ear studs, oil, incense, kohl, white cotton stuff, medicines, are all coin of the realm, according to the position and need of the district.

The final obstacle to trade is the multitude of customs already referred to, and the system of graft by which every official lives, since none of them receive a salary, but have to make a living, the *Dejesmatch* out of his province, the *Feterari* out of his district, the *chum* out of his village. Merchants are obliged to

pay so much baksheesh in order to be allowed to trade at all that their profits are too small for them to develop any reasonable business. I asked an intelligent *nagadi* why he did not add ready-made sandals to his wares, since every Abyssinian uses them and pays separately for the leather of soles, straps and thongs, which make this form of footwear twice as expensive in the mountains as in the towns, though the hides are home-grown in the former.

"It would take too long to explain the change," he said, and I remembered that, to the peasant, time and speech are of no value!

Some of these reflections I confided to the Commendatore as the cigarette ash piled up beside us. He criticized or approved, but always amplified from his store of experience.

"It is only a superficial impression," I deprecated, "we've worked and traveled equally hard in these few months we've been here."

Our host interrupted—"An impression is valuable. Years of study are invaluable, but anything between the two is useless."

"What do you mean?"

"You have travelled so much—do you need to ask? Don't you know how your first clear-cut certainties are blurred by a little experience? At first you know instinctively, but, after an interlude of uncertainty, it takes a long time to recapture that knowledge."

"Experience blinds one to essentials," interposed another Italian, politely building up the fiction.

"What is your judgment?" I asked the Commendatore.

"Money is an obsession in this country," he said.

"A childish one, since it has no value."

"Children are very seldom bad at heart," was the shrewd retort, and I realized that the last word had been said.

A guard of white turkeys, gobbling furiously, saw us off next morning.

"My seraglio," explained the Commendatore, and an amazing crowd of geese, fowls, and pigeons came running at the sound of his voice.

"You have no other?" I asked, remembering his monograph on Ethiopian women.

"Too dangerous," he twinkled. "We agreed that experience was a blind!"

Adua was mist-blue as we rode north along the chain of her strangely-shaped peaks. The battle-field which changed the future and the balance of power in Abyssinia lay between them. Here, in March, 1896, the Italians, attempting to enforce the treaty of Ucciali, by which they had imposed a virtual protectorate upon Menelik, were defeated by an army which has been variously estimated between 90,000 and 200,000. Out-numbered five to one, the Italians with faulty maps, failed to concentrate after a night march at the time expected by their leader, Baratari. All through the darkness, the lords of Ethiopia, Tekla Haimanot of Gojam, Ras Mikael with the Wolla Galla cavalry, Mangasha of Tigre, and, in the rear, Menelik and his Empress, were praying that the Italians would attack. Hourly their armies were dwindling, as hunger or indifference sent the riflemen back to their villages. Hourly the hundreds of attendant priests called on Gorgis and

Mikael, the fighting saints, to speed the battle of their deliverance.

"Let the foreigners attack!" they urged, and both the appeal and the strategy which prompted it were justified, for, in the morning, after a series of detached offensives, the Italians were routed with a loss of 10,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners. The treaty of Ucciali was annulled, and the Powers recognized the independence of unconquered Abyssinia.

That day we rode to Mareb, the river boundary of Eritrea, and it took the caravan ten and a half hours to do the twenty-one miles. We went ahead on the mules loaned by the most hospitable consul, and, finding a flock of goats, paid a bullet to a naked imp for the privilege of milking them. I never knew goats could be so deceptive. We turned the *zabaniers* loose among the elusive animals, and they returned, dragging the fattest matrons behind them, but none provided us with more than a few spoonfuls of milk and it took four people an hour's hard and hot work to fill one bottle.

At Mareb we were welcomed by a guard of Italian *askari*, in tall red fezes.

"There are many robbers here, so the Dejezmatch Mangasha sent us to look after you," said the sergeant in admirable Italian. They did it most effectively. In two minutes they had cleared the ground for our tents, brought wood and water and hustled off in search of fodder.

"There are also eggs, lady, and twelve chickens, which the Dejezmatch Mangasha has sent for your dinner."

Jones looked at the squawking bunch with disgust.

"The eighty-second," he murmured, but I remembered the lean days and was appropriately grateful.

Accompanied by the *askaris*, we attacked the last fifteen miles to Addi Quala where a lorry awaited us. At Gondar we found the donor of our evening meal, mounted on a splendid white mule, trapped in scarlet and silver, waiting with fifty rifles to receive us. Amidst much ceremony and a continual exchange of compliments, we approached the village, where a procession of priests, with cross and pennon, brocaded vestment and crimson umbrellas, greeted us, murmuring a pater-noster. Dismounting, we kissed the emblems of the faith, as firmly rooted in Abyssinia as the rocks which contain her gold and, as illogically, a barrier to her progress. *Tedj* was provided for the whole caravan and we drank it under the grandfather of all sycamores in the middle of an interested crowd. Then, in spite of the protest of the delightful *Dejezmach*, who wanted to lavish innumerable goats, chickens and eggs upon us, we marshaled the caravan, deprived the last lingerer of his hope of getting comfortably drunk, and drove beasts and men towards the final climb.

"Thank the Lord," said Jones, "I needn't see another egg for some time."

There was a reflective air about him which I mistrusted.

"Don't begin to count them," I implored.

As soon as the roofs of Addi Quala, thatch and tin, mud and plaster, came into view on the edge of the plateau, to which we had climbed from a dry river bed full of wells, our one thought was the car.

"Supposing it hasn't arrived!" we said aghast, for we had discarded joyfully and very thoroughly at Mareb all that rocks and thorns had left us of camp outfit. There was a moment of anxiety. Then, beside a white Government building, we found a sturdy Fiat lorry, into which we piled all our luggage, while Jones, who had a passion for counting, developed I believe, by some mysterious necessity of his work, assured me that we had ridden 451 hours since we left Dire Dawa. Discreetly, in the shelter of some pepper trees, I shed my tattered boots and breeches. As I emerged, skirted and wondering, for the first time, how many inches of my once shingled hair were poking out under my hat brim, the smiling Italian driver ran up to me, "Signora, a present is lucky at the end of a journey. See a hen has laid an egg for you in the lorry!"

"I'm glad you didn't give it to the Signor," I returned, "it would have spoilt his calculations!"

Our farewells were long and complicated by the local headman, who piled *anjera* and jars of *talla* at my feet in the middle of them, but at last we were off, a cloud of dust behind us and a road, a real road, in front of us. Jones took off his hat and bowed as we passed the caravan, which one of the monkey slaves was driving to water.

"I hope I may never meet a mule again—at least not intimately," he said.

"I shall miss that jelly-fish feeling in the morning," I reflected, "when one wonders if one can keep one's back upright through another day's jolting."

So, after 1,090 miles, most of them on gradients only

suited to a centipede, we departed from Abyssinia, the richer for our cases of exposed film and a host of memories grave and gay, the poorer for the little bit of oneself that one leaves on every journey.

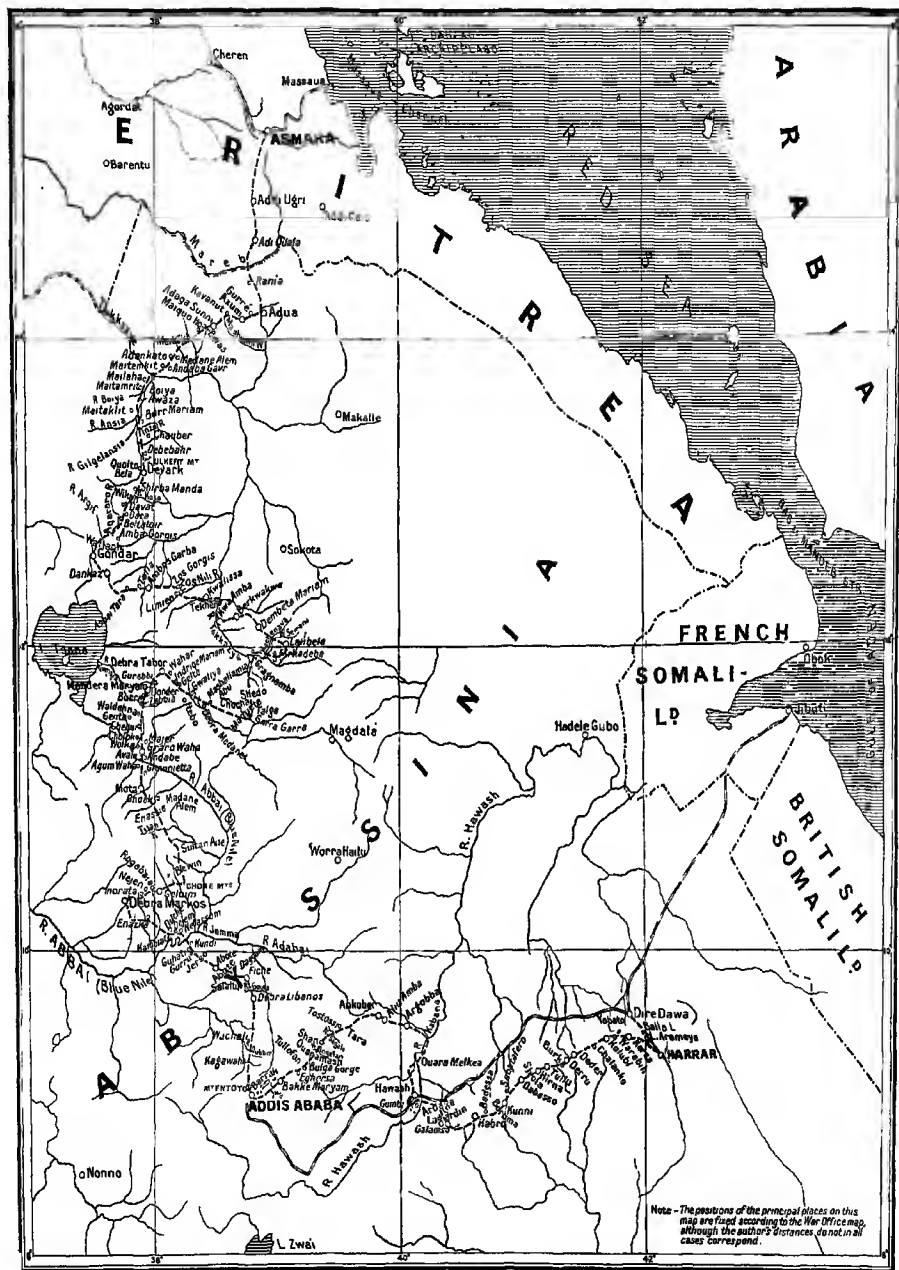


TABLE OF MARCHES

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Jan. 16	Left Dire Dawa, 7.30 a.m.	3 p.m.	Lake Arameya.	6½	21	Up Valley of Harri. Climbed from Dire Dawa 3,700 ft. to Plateau, 6,000 ft. Passed Lake Balla at 6,000 ft. up. Plateau and cultivation. Har- rar 17 miles. Large village on rise above plain.
Jan. 17	8 a.m.	11.45	Harraz, 6,000 ft.	3¾	12	
Jan. 21	7.45 a.m.	3.15	Kersa.	6	20	
Jan. 22	7.35	1.15	Kolubi, 6,600 ft. Small vil- lage—many reeds.	5	15	Passed Yabato Lake (dry) at 7½ miles. Warabli at 12 miles.
Jan. 23	7.35	4.15	Deder.	7¾	22	Passed Chalanko, scattered villages at 9 miles. Ridge and valley. Steep climb to Deder on mountain.
Jan. 24	7.35	3.10	Tullu	6½	19	Passed Derru, 2¼ miles. Burka dis- trict, entered at 6 miles. 3 hrs. march through forest after Derru.
Jan. 25	7.30	2.30	Debasso.	2	17	Burka stream, after 11 miles. Crossed 2 steep mountain ridges with valley of Hirna and large village (11 miles from Tullu) in between. For- est near Tullu.
Jan. 26	7.15	3.0	Kunni.	6	17	Through Shola province, on ridge be- tween valleys. To Sabatafero, large new village, in northern one and dry lake in southern. To Kunni, group

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Jan. 27	7.5	3.30	Habro.	7¼	21	of scattered hovels on ridge between two forest-covered masses of Kunni Mountains. Sharp descent from Kunni. Entered Boroma district at 7 miles. Rolling grass downs, sharp crested. Passed large village, Badesa, 12 miles. Entered Habro after 18 miles.
Jan. 28	6.45 a.m.	10.45 p.m.	Galanso.	4	11	Short march through grassy downs. Halt, Galanso (market) to provision caravan. Lake Chercher (dry) to south of down ridge. Arussi hills in distance south.
Jan. 29	7.30	3.15	Ariaga.	6½	18	Difficult march over Lagardin ridge. Steep, rocky series of descents to barren valley with no water. Quantities of thorns and euphorbias. No villages.
Jan. 30	7.5	1.0	Hawash.	5.55	16	Down, through plain and thorns, to River Hawash in deep gorge. No houses. Gumbi, 3 hills beside river. On S. bank of Hawash, railway station and village.

Jan. 31	1.10	6.5	Ouara Melkea.		5.40 mins. quick march.	19	Flat desert, few thorns. Very hot. Saw gazelle, oryx, dyk-dyk. Camped near banana plantations and first water since Hawash.
Feb. 1	7.20	6.0	Argobba—3 villages on hills. End of Dankalis.		9½ hrs.	23	Crossed River Kabana after 8 or 9 miles. Last water till Argobba. Rolling grass and thorns: dry, deep walters. Passed first of group of 3 villages at 21 miles, all on hills.
Feb. 2	8.15	3.10	Allu Amba. Large villages between high ridge and Ankober Mountain.		6.35	16½	Very hard march over steep rocky ridges and boulders. Cotton in quantities. Moslem villages on most hills.
Feb. 3	7.45	12 noon	Ankober.		3 hrs.	7½	Large village (thatched) ancient capital, seat of provincial Government (Dejezmatch Asafa) on high sugar-loaf peak, one of summits of Ankober range. Pop. approx. 6,000.
Feb. 4	9 a.m.	4.45	In Tara district.		7¼	18½	Climbed ridge North of Ankober and, after 6 miles, started S.W. across plateau, much plough, no trees or scrub or long grass. Bleak, wavy, rocky. Many very small villages. Tara above deep gorge 17 miles.
Feb. 5	8.10	4.30	By Wadi Ingefani in Sbrano district.		7	17½	Plateau, no vegetation, lots of grain, wide route. Stone-built villages, grass-thatched, in stone compounds. Left Tara after 3½ miles at Wadi

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

<i>Date</i>	<i>Starting Time</i>	<i>Time Arrived</i>	<i>Camping Place</i>	<i>Actual Marching Hours</i>	<i>Approx. Mileage</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Feb. 6	7.45	3.5	Nr. Church at Bakke Maryam.	8.5	21	full of water. Moslem village, Tostosi, above. At 6 miles Mt. Gumbibid gave name to village across track. At 8½ miles crossed Wadi Sagali (water) and began province of Sagali.
						Left Shano District at trees on hill 2½ miles. Quaramash District began, and ended at Mt. (Tullu) Gafa above large wadi with water at 9 miles. Tullofan villages 9½ miles on edge of Bulga gorge which ran S. of route all subsequent day. At 10½ miles descent into plain of Eghersa. At 11¼ miles (saw Mt. Yerror and Mt. Zucqual S.W.) Eghersa church and villages, also gum trees. At 15½ miles passed Allatu, small hill north of route and entered Choli District. At 17½ miles entered Bakke District by wadi full of water. From there Barrak Mts. N. of route 1 mile and Bulga Gorge, fading south.
Feb. 7	7.30	3 p.m.	Addis Ababa.	7.40	18½	Crossed Laga Daddi stream 9 miles. Climbed Barrak ridge, 13½ miles.

Feb. 16	8	4 p.m.	Camped at deep narrow river bed, Kagawaha.	8¼	90	Choli District ends. Suburbs of Addis in forest of gum trees. Left Addis and climbed Mt. Entoto passing between two churches. Slight descent to rather grassy uplands. Much cultivation. No vegetation. Scattered houses. Left Salaltu District at 18 miles.
Feb. 17	6.45 a.m.	3.45	By stream in Wuchali.	7¼	18	Crossed Dubber River, deep gorge 8½ miles. Group Dubber villages 11 miles. Entered Wuchali District, 13½ miles. All grass uplands: ridges, round-backed; few trees. Crossed several small streams.
Feb. 18	6.5 a.m.	9.15	Debra Libanos on River Jamma, tributary of Blue Nile system.	3.10	9	At 7½ miles came to huge gorge. Sudden drop into it by massive precipices. Debra Libanos, Abyssinian Jerusalem, at bottom. Large scattered village. Many churches. Pop. about 5,000.
Feb. 19	10 a.m.	12.40	Fiche, above same deep gorge with river at bottom. Ras Kassa's H.Q.'s.	3 hrs. on horses. Caravan took 4 hrs.	11½	Ataur, mighty gorge. At 2½ miles, crossed rivulet descending into it. Goura. All Salali District. Fiche: large village scattered over oblong rise.

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Feb. 20	7.45 car. On horses	4 p.m. Car 3.45	On stream between Jerso and Abote. Jerso is 7,710 ft. high.	8¼	20½	Grass plateau, rare trees. Passed into Daggam at 5 miles. Entered Abote District 12½ miles. Main village at 15 miles. At 14 miles steep rocky descent from plateau into valley below Jerso ridge. Adabai gorge north-east.
Feb. 21	6.20 a.m.	3.15 p.m.	Above Abbai River. Half-way down S. side of gorge.	7¾	18	Climbed Jerso ridge. Arrived barren grass table-land, bleak. Gurru villages at 11 miles. Guhati village with fine old church, Gahazion Mariam, at 13½ miles. Kundi Market at top of cliff—14 miles. Precipitous descent 4,320 ft. to river.
Feb. 22	6.20	4 p.m.	Dejem. 7,393 ft. high.	8¾	18	Crossed Blue Nile after 4 miles descent. Climbed 8 miles to Nefassam village, 14,000 ft. above river. Villages below Nefassam called Kurru.
Feb. 23	7 a.m.	7 p.m. on horses.	Debra Markos.	11	25	Left Kamlat on gorge left, crossed stream and turned N., leaving Enabi on main road at 2 miles to left. Passed Duche 5 miles, with church, Estephan on hill. At 12 miles

Feb. 24			At Debra Markos.			crossed Yegeder stream with village. Enaska villages at 14 miles. After them thick woods till just before Debra Markos.
Feb. 25	7.15	2.15	Geltum. Small village opposite Mount Arrat Makrak.	7	17½	Small hills, chiefly wooded. Querata village 6 miles. Left Nejen to west of us 8½ miles. Rohgabata market, 16 miles.
Feb. 26	7.5	3.10	Sultan Aile (Selesse Aile?)	8	20	Crossed Choke Mountains, 10,620 ft. Began descent after 14 miles. Left Bewin district, west, at 16 miles with Damut Mt. beyond. Choke has no villages; rock, aloes, thistles, ambigua trees, all enormous.
Feb. 27	7 a.m.	2.5 p.m.	Mota. Large village on hill, 8,100 ft. high. Church St. George, 300 years old.	7	18	Continued gradual descent by wooded slopes to Graro Waha 6¼ miles. At 7 miles crossed T'ijan rivulet and entered Enassie. Open rolling grass-land. Table-top mimosas. Left on east, Chonk Madane-Alem, small village 14 miles.
Feb. 28	7.15	3.50	Graro Waha. Spring and small village on edge of Andaben district. Wolka and Majer large villages visible 2½ miles to North.	8½	17	After 5 miles began descent to Nile ravine, after crossing stream. At 7½ miles saw to east, village, Gim-onietta. Very steep rocky twisting descent, 3,000 ft. to Agum Waha rivulet. At 9 miles passed Agum

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Mar. 1	7 a.m.	2.25 p.m.	On Gota river, 4 miles past Shimle.	7½	17	Waha village, west, and at 10 miles crossed A.W. rivulet. Crossed Nile by bridge 11½ miles; very precipitous climb down. Very precipitous climb over 2,000 ft. up. Entered Baiyemider Province, 15½ miles at Andabe village on ledge of cliff. Left Avala at 14 miles, below W. of track. At 17 miles and top of cliff, reached Graro Waha Village.
						Stony, grass country, bisected with creeks. Grazing, no cultivation. Through Majer, 2½ miles. Wolka 1 mile east. Cholok village W. of track, 3¼ miles. Passed Chequl, Mascaigne - Gavar, Danquar - Jesus (Church) and Waldehna villages in a string 4 to 5½ miles W. of track. Saw Genta on hill with trees after 5 miles. It appeared some 3 miles to west. Round stony dunes dropped into grass valley at 6½ miles. Wuf-chanu village in valley at 8 miles. At 9½ miles Kagowano village. At 13¾ miles entered narrow valley and Shimie village on hill W. of track. Many trees, and river running down middle of valley.

Mar. 2	7.15	3.45	Mahdera Maryam. Large village on sheer cliff above valley.	8½	18	Up same valley by Gota river. At 9½ miles Zabola Village on left. Valley narrowed to point at 4 miles and Burra village left. Crossed ridge. Dunder village 9¼ miles left. 11¼ miles crossed Gomara River (first of name!) 11¾ miles Makalge village. Crossed Alakt Wons River 15½ miles. Came up rift in wooded cliff by stream to Mahdera Maryam village. Chiefly wooded hilly country.
Mar. 3	7.15	1.15	Debra Tabor. Collection of villages on high cliff. 3,000 inhabitants. Capital of Ras Gooksa Woli.	6	11½	Descent from Mahdera Maryam. Thickly wooded stony hills with rivers between ridges. Crossed Savet Wadel at 3½ miles and Gomara at 6¼ miles. Gurebbi village, right, at 10 miles.
Mar. 4	7.30	3.30	On edge of narrow ravine. Gwalya villages, 1½ miles beyond.	8	18	Alternate hills and fairly easy grass slopes. Crossed many streams. Main villages Wahar left, 6 miles. Indrige Mariam 10 miles. Gelte-Geddz-Michael 13¾ miles.
Mar. 5	6.50	4.40	Chocha:	9.50	22½	Took southern track by mistake at Yikalo River at 3¼ miles. (Village and Church of Itebo above.) Left S. route, turning N.E. at 6 miles; passed at 10¼ miles, villages of Debra Medanet on right on hill. After

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Mar. 6	7 a.m.	3.45	Targa Village.	8	18	12½ miles passed 2 villages of Mashallamia Abu. Broad track on. At 19 miles began descent to ravines and crags of Chocha.
Mar. 7	6.35	4 p.m.	3 villages of Gragnambe from which could see Lalibela on high cliff.	9.20	22	Left Chocha Mts. at 6 miles. Entered Maquete District, 10 miles. Found waterhole, 13 miles. At 17 miles entered Garra Garra at church Giorgis. Several villages in valley after sharp descent.
Mar. 8	6.10	10.15	Lalibela. Large village.	4	11	Chiefly rocky low hills, cut up by river-beds. Passed 2 villages of Gafat left, below track, 2½ miles. Crossed Totava River and entered Shedo District, 4½ miles. Crossed River Deramo 8½ miles and passed village right. Derifag, 200 yards above. Dibike village 12 miles. Dibike customs 13 miles. Crossed large river, Takkazy, 21 miles. Climbed slightly 1 mile. Massif 11,900 ft. ridge of Befo on right as descended to Takkazy.
						Crossed River Kachenava, 3½ miles. Passed through 2 villages of Firka-

Mar. 9	6.45 (caravan). We at 9 on horses.	4 p.m.	Dembeta village on the top of ridge in slight hollow. (Church Mariam away left.)	9	20½	<p>deba, 5 miles. Climbed ridge and reached top at 7½ miles. Descended and went round to Lalibela, 11 miles.</p> <p>At 3½ miles crossed Simana River. At 6 miles passed Damaneski village right and ¾ mile further Tavasas village left. Crossed Bilbala River 12 miles and passed Sarrena village 13¼ miles. Underground Church—Michael, at 14½ miles. Village Gihazen 15 miles. Crossed Ali River 17 miles and River Asaba 17¼ miles. All rocky hills and thick scrub. Steepest ascent last 2¼ miles to top of ridge.</p>
Mar. 10	7.15	3 p.m.	Berkwakwa Mariam, large village. Rocky hills, barren, few thorns.	8	17	<p>At 3 miles village Tacoma Kunmi left. At 4¼ miles through 3 small villages of Martalla. Church Mariam left. Saw snow on Mt. Abouana Josef far to east from ridge at 6 miles. At 7¼ miles, from razor-back ridge between 2 valleys, saw villages Leidiba Gorgis below (church). Birka village 9½ miles. Talquan below (left) 12½ miles and Akela-Giddis—Michael below left. At 15 miles passed one Berkwakwa village right, below.</p>

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Mar. 11	7	3.40	Kwa Amba, village. Church above. Goat track, loose rock, and thorn thickets. Barren hills. No cultivation.	8½	17	Passed Gafsa Setessi, 4½ miles. At 6 miles saw 5 villages of Gadamiel across valley right, and small village left below, Matachela. Crossed Alka River 10½ miles. At 11½ miles, two villages of Zerbela.
Mar. 12	7.4	3.35	Kwalissa. Small village. No cultivation. (Koriza on War Office map.) Rocky hills and thorns round deep Takkazyé gorge.	8	16	At 3 miles passed Abu Mander, only village on day's march. At 6½ miles N.N.W. crossed Takkazyé, after steep descent. Strip grass and forest trees, in bed. One mile up Takkazyé bed. Up tributary Tekhen 4 miles. Left it for hill track right. Thorns and rocks, 4½ or 5 miles to Kwalissa village.
Mar. 13	7 a.m.	5.15	Above River Nili or Ali. Near village of Lhuden. Guide lost way and made 5 miles detour. Camped just under Zos Gorgia.	10	20	7 miles up and down thorny hills. Then up dry river bed Meroina. At 8¼ miles saw village right, high up. Left river for hills. At 10 miles passed fertile valley Maret Sha. Village left. At 15 miles, crossed dry stream and went round two hills with villages on them and down to river. 7,000 ft. tabular ridge of Zos Gorgia visible all day.

Mar. 14	7.5	4.30	Ambos Garba or Gabaye. Guide lost way several times.	10	17½	Up cliffs and dry stream (no track) to Zos Gorgis (3 hours) about 5 miles. Zos Gorgis, Troglodyte church. Crossed mountain chain. At 6 miles Yetinura village right. At 8½ Ligne village left. 9 miles Conical Mountain of Aikan. Village, Tiliik Meder, right, on edge of it. At 11¼ miles Gwala, large village. At 15 miles Dangara District and villages. 15¼ miles mass of villages Adurige and Menderdije. 16½ miles through Tewfenba villages crossed river.
Mar. 15	7.10	4	9½ miles beyond Kale Medane Alem in valley under Dankaz.	8¾	20	Talla village 4 miles. Crossed Mana or Maganana River at 7½ miles. At 8¾ miles, two villages of Abbal Tara. At 15 miles village Inchaiye. At 16¼ miles SENCHI village. At 19 miles Kale Medane Alem village.
Mar. 16	6.50	5.15	In valley below Gondar.	10½	21	Climbed cliff and then across grass table-land to Dankaz, 11 miles. Saw Lake Tsana from further edge of table-land at 12¼ miles. Began descent at 13 miles. Ended it at 15¼ miles. Through wooded valley. No villages. Rough hills and rare cultivation.

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

Date	Starting Time	Time Arrived	Camping Place	Actual Marching Hours	Approx. Mileage	Remarks
Mar. 17	6.10	8.30	Gondar: Many churches, 3,500 inhabitants. Ruins Old Portuguese palaces and forts.	2	5	Over scrub-covered hillocks. Across river and little valley. Up ridge to Gondar.
Mar. 18	8.10	5.30	Beside Ageraro Stream.	9.20	21½	Entered Wallach District, 6½ miles. Crossed Argif River 13¼ miles. Left Amba Gorgis church on hill right at 19½ miles.
Mar. 19	7.30	3.45	North side of Wiken hill by Koso stream.	8.20	20½	Passed Belhatoir (village right) 4½ miles. At 9 miles passed Dara market. Village right. Passed Toukour Bahr village left near, with Davat (Dakwa on War Office map) behind far away, at 11¼ miles, first village of Wiken at 18 miles. Davat is 3 miles from nearest point of track. Grass country. Uneven. Many trees and streams.
Mar. 20	7.30	6.30	4 miles beyond and below Debebah, in gorge, having descended between 4,000 ft. and 5,000 ft. Very hot.	8	17¾	Passed Shirba Manda and Awara villages right at 2½ miles. Devark at 8¼ miles. Quotto Bela left ½ mile beyond Devark. Wasted 3 hours in quarrel with Feterari. Grass till Ulkeft cliffs. Descent of tremendous Ulkeft cliffs at 10¼ miles. Debebah village on ledge at bottom

Mar. 21	7.45	5.50	Burr Mariam, small village and spring.	9½	19	at 13¾ miles. Further precipitous descent to deep narrow gorge. Camped on small ledge nearly at bottom.
Mar. 22	7.15	4.45	Maitamrit. Many small villages off track.	9½	18½	Crossed Zarima River 6½ miles. Passed Chauber village, far right below, 11¼ miles. Crossed Inzo River (large) 16¼ miles.
Mar. 23	7.4	4 p.m.	Maitamkit. Scattered houses on ridge above Takkazy.	8¾	17	At 2¼ miles crossed Gilgelansia stream. At 2½ miles crossed Ansia River. Maitaklit customs 7 miles. Village left, off track. Saw Awaza village far right below, 9¼ miles. Boiya village right, above, 13½ miles. Crossed Boiya River, 15¼ miles.
Mar. 24	7.15	5.45	Maitemem. Water-hole and palms. No village.	10¾	20	Crossed River Anemasameraja 2½ miles. Village Mailaba 4¾ miles. At 10 miles started descent to Takkazy. ½ mile along bank. Up opposite cliffs.
						Dauw Johannes far left on ridge at 1 mile. Andaba Gavr 1¾ miles. Adankato customs 4½ miles. Medane Alem right on cliff 6¾ miles. Amba right 7¼ miles, under hill. Addi Baguna Mt. left and water right at 12 miles, Maibaki 14 miles.

TABLE OF MARCHES—continued

<i>Date</i>	<i>Starting Time</i>	<i>Time Arrived</i>	<i>Camping Place</i>	<i>Actual Marching Hours</i>	<i>Approx. Mileage</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Mar. 25	7.15	3.25	Adaga Sunni. Group of villages on small hills. Water and cultivation in valley between.	8	16	Maishifnain 15 miles. (Table-land began at 1½ miles.) Coarse grass and trees.
Mar. 26	6.45	3 p.m.	Axum, 4,000 population.	8	16½	Adda. Saleesi customs and village 9½ miles. Maiquo Ho water and villages above left, at 8 miles. Inda Gorgis left 9½ miles, Belas left 10½ miles. Over and through spur of rocky hills to Adaga Sunni.
Mar. 27	7.40	1.15	Adulu. Approx. 8,000 pop. Italian Consulate.	5½	13	Passed Maishunni water 7¼ miles. Village Kavanut 10 miles. Alternating stony hills and grass hollows.
Mar. 28	7 a.m. Caravan	5.30	Mareb River, boundary of Eritrea.	10½	21	Grass plain. Low hills. Adua, large village, among trees at foot of mountains. Passed Gurré villages left at 7 miles.
Mar. 29	7.30	1.30	Addi Quala.	6	15	Rocky hills for 12 miles. Then plain of sand and thorns. Abyssinian customs at Rania, 16 miles, left. Thorns and rocky hillocks, boulders, up river-bed to bottom of ascent to plateau.

SUMMARY

HOURS' MARCH—450½ APPROX. MILES—1,089½
384

GLOSSARY

- ABBIET MARIAM—"Hail Mary"
ABOUNA—the head of Abyssinian church
ANJERA—bread
ARAKI—alcohol
BAKSHEESH—tips
BALLAMBARASSI—Lieutenant
BERBERI—a red pepper sauce
BIRZ—a sweet drink
BUTCHA—"little one," in Hindustani
CALABASH—a gourd made from a dried pumpkin
CHAMMA—the white, sheetlike wrap worn by Abyssinians
CHUM—headman
DEJEZMATCH—General
DERSELAAM—Arabic exclamation
DERGO—governmental hospitality
DOM-PALM—a palm with hard fruit
EL HAMDULILLAH—"thank God!"
ELEPHANTIASIS—a monstrous swelling disease
FETERARI—Colonel
FETHA NEGAST—books of law—religious, civil, and traditional
FRANGI—tips
GEZE—the ancient tongue of Ethiopia
GIBBE—palace
GRAZMATCH—Captain
JAMIL—mosque
KHABRAL—caravan leader
KOYAZMATCH—Major
MALESH—"it doesn't matter!"
MARHABA—an exclamation of pleasure or greeting
MASHILA—small grains or seeds which men and mules eat.

386 FROM RED SEA TO BLUE NILE

MONOPHYSITE—a Christian sect which denies the dual nature of Christ

MUEZZIN—Moslem call to prayer

NAGADI—head muleteer

NEGUS—Emperor

RAS—Chief or Prince

SAREE—the Indian women's dress

SAYED—a Moslem holy man

SHIMBURA—same as *mashila*

SUQ—market

TAFFI—same as *mashila*

TALLA—ale

TEDJ—mead

TEHAMA—Arabian plain

TEYD—tall forest trees

TOBH—Arab word for dress, shirt or cloth

TOPEE—a pith hat or helmet

TUKEL—mud and thatched hut

WAIZERU—Princess

WARKA—sycamore

ZABANIER—unofficial policeman

ZIGBAR—same as *mashila*..

